

Happyboy Mgxaji

Bra Nko



Sunday Times

Nkosana Happyboy Mgxaji (1949 –)

Nkosana 'Happyboy' Mgxaji was born in Tsolo Location (later Duncan Village). His mother sold vegetables to make a living. 'Happyboy' dropped out of school in Standard 6 (Grade 8). He started boxing to defend himself on the mean township streets. But he was also very good at rugby, and was once selected to play rugby for the Border team. Unfortunately he was also scheduled to box in a tournament on the same day. He chose to go to the boxing tournament and tried to lie to his teachers that he couldn't play rugby because he had been ill. Unfortunately for him they had already seen a report of his boxing prowess in the newspaper!

Happyboy became a boxing wonder when he competed in the South African amateur championships in Port Elizabeth in 1963. He was praised for his style, craftiness in the ring and speed. Often known affectionately as Bra Nko, Happyboy inspired lots of other boxers. He turned professional in 1968 with help from Mzoli Madyaka, although he never had a formal trainer. He devised his own training schedules, which often consisted of walking on the beach, chopping wood and running. He was unbeaten until 1971 when Anthony 'Blue Jaguar' Morodi got the better of him. But Happyboy defeated the Blue Jaguar the next year. Happyboy fought in 88 fights, drew 4 times and lost 9.

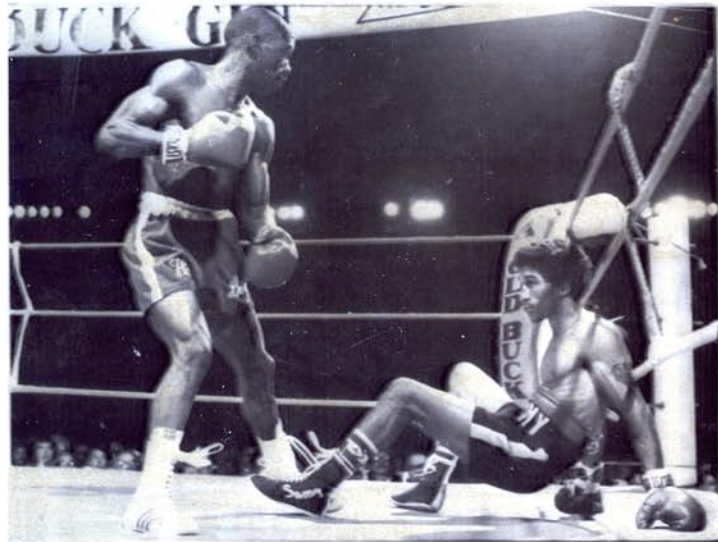
At the end of his career he didn't have much money left and lives alone in Mdantsane on a state pension.

Nkosana "Happy Boy" Mgxaji fighting against Evans Gwiji Sunday Times, 17 June 1978



Sports Writing – Thinking about genres

In this lesson plan, learners will be able to study two newspaper articles about Happyboy's fights. They will see that sports writing forms its own genre. Writers adopt a special sort of humour because they are writing for readers who expect to get a sense of pleasure from the articles on the sports pages. Compare this to what readers expect from the news pages, the editorial or a careers supplement. Learners will begin to realise that there are different kinds of written sources, often shaped by readers' expectations!



Sam Serrano goes down after some hard punches from Happy Boy Mgxaji Sunday Times, 16 April 1979

Source A: 'Little did we know that we were making history'

SO EASY FOR HAPPY

CAPE TOWN — In one of the easiest fights of his career, Happyboy Mgxaji punished Manuel de Paiva for seven rounds before the fight was stopped in the eighth stanza, for Happy to be crowned South Africa's best junior-lightweight.

Happy toyed with De Paiva, catching him at will with stinging punches. De Paiva was obviously not in Mgxaji's class. The Mdantsane idol is now first contender for Sam Serrano's WBA world junior-light crown.

When the Mgxaji camp met me before the weigh-in at the Cape Ringside Club gymnasium, they gave me a

piece of paper they said was "a surprise". Yes, a surprise it was. A doggerel.

The doggerel said: They call him Manny, but tonight he'll be Nanny.

I could not establish who the author of the doggerel was as Happy's camp decided to keep it a secret. The poem, however, was handed to me by Ronnie Madinda, who is to Happyboy what Bundini Brown is to Muhammad Ali.

After the third round, the crowd urged Happy to knock his man out — maybe in sympathy with the white champion, who was absorbing cruel punishment.

In the seventh round, there were more pleas to Happy to put De Paiva out of his misery. I had predicted a win for Happy in that round.

Happy, however, chose to make his manager's prediction come true, as Welcome Mtongwe had predicted a win for his boy in the eighth stanza.

De Paiva's corner threw in the towel in the eighth after the Free Stater had been dropped by a flurry of punches. He took the mandatory count and was on rubbery legs when festivities were resumed.

His corner wisely stopped the fight to save De Paiva from both severe punishment and humilia-

tion as Happy was playing the billy goat with him — only there was no clowning in the shots he unleashed.

Apart from the Happyboy-De Paiva fight, the Bashew Sibaca-Hansie van Rooyen do was the only fight that saw one side hoarding all the points.

Sibaca took all the rounds, winning by a big margin the fourth when he dropped Van Rooyen for the mandatory eight count, for a points tally of 56-48.

Joe Hali, who made supreme middleweight champion, Doug Lumley look ordinary, was not disgraced by his points loss.

After losing the first three rounds in a row and being dropped in the first, he went on to take the 4th and 5th. He drew the 6th and came back to win the 7th.

In the next three rounds, he allowed himself to be hit by otherwise avoidable punches and at the end, Lumley was a winner by two points (67-65).

20 000 83 7. 7. INDABA happy chappies

By Roosevelt Fani
EAST LONDON
— The idol is back.

The evergreen Happyboy Mgxaji entranced 20 000 fans to wrest the South African junior welter-weight title from Arthur Mayisela, of Soweto, on points over 12 rounds.

There is no stopping the Mdantsane man.

People were saying he was finished years ago but Mgxaji keeps battling on to prove he is still good enough to win a South African title.

From the start, Mgxaji

displayed his boxing skill, although still lacking a finishing punch. The first round was even.

In the second, Mgxaji hit Mayisela heavily with lefts and rights. Mgxaji surprisingly slowed his pace and gave Mayisela a breather.

He still hits with open glove and was warned several times.

Mayisela countered with good lefts and rights but he still could not work out Mgxaji's style.

In round six Mgxaji cut Mayisela on the left eyebrow. Mayisela was already bleeding from the nose after a heavy left during the third round.

Mayisela came to life in the ninth round but Mgxaji stopped him several times by hitting him solidly to body and face.

In the tenth round the crowd urged Mgxaji to knock out Mayisela but both boxers were tired.

The last two rounds were hard with each boxer going in to try to end the fight.

Two judges gave Mgxaji the win but one judge gave the fight to Mayisela.

Mayisela seemed unhappy at the decision and would not leave the ring.

Mgxaji's fans were shouting: "Happy, happy, you are great. The title stays here."

Two other interesting bouts were between Prince Tukani and Hannes van der Berg and between Fraser Ndzandze and Jacob Molefe. Tukani and Ndzandze won convincingly.

Tukani gave Van der Berg a lesson. He hit him solidly on the body, head and face. Van der Berg managed to survive the fight.

flyweight, Phila Kali beat Dexter Dlamini tko in third round; Bobin Sityana outpointed Makaya Nkobo.

Learner Activities

- Sports writers for newspapers often write humorously. Identify the jokes and use of sarcasm in *Source A*.
- Why do you think sports writers use humour? (Think of who they are writing for. What do you expect from the articles when you turn to the sports pages?)
- What do people get out of participating in or watching sport? Can you say now why sport is part of our heritage?
- You can see how many fans Happyboy had from *Source B*. What do you think makes people like boxing? Why were his fans especially happy on this occasion?
- What made Happyboy a good boxer? Pick up clues from *Source B*.

Other Ideas

Find out about other boxing legends (don't forget that nowadays there are women boxers too!) Make a mural for your classroom wall of boxing champions.



Happy Boy Mgxaji in a fight *Sunday Times*, 3 March 1974

Criteria for Assessment

- Learners are able to identify the use of humour in a written source.
- Learners are able to give sound reasons for why certain writers would use humour.
- Learners can express reasons for sport being a part of our heritage.
- Learners demonstrate an ability to read a source closely for information (on Happyboy's boxing techniques).

Curriculum Link – Grades 10 & 11

LO 1, AS 3

LO 4, AS 1

Content link – nature of resistance to apartheid

'20 000 happy chappies' in *Dispatch*, 7 July 1983