

Boxing a family affair still for Leon Spinks

By DAVID BOYCE

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Dressed all in black, he walked slowly through Kansas City Market Center to the boxing ring. In his wake, people whispered, "Is that Leon Spinks?"

Yes, it was. Spinks, the former heavyweight champion of the world, was in Kansas City on Tuesday night for a boxing card presented by Park Place Hotel and Main Event Promotions.

No, Spinks, 43, wasn't here to fight. His methodical walk makes it clear that his boxing days are long behind him. Instead, Spinks sat near ringside and yelled encouragement to his 24-year old son, Darryl Spinks, a light heavyweight.

"Jab, jab, jab," Spinks said to his son in the first round. "There you go."

Darryl Spinks listened, and he peppered Les Croy in the first round with one left jab after another.

"Yes, I hear him," Darryl said. "He's right there."

Before Darryl left his corner for the second round, Leon told him to throw an overhand left. Darryl threw a few of those at Croy. By the end of the second round, Darryl sent Croy to the canvas. The only thing that saved Croy was the bell.

In the third round, Darryl used Croy's face as a punching bag. Midway through the round, after Croy went down a second time, referee Ross Strada stopped the bout. Darryl left with a 10-0 record, and that left a smile on his father's face.

"He's still getting his thang together," Leon said. "He has promise."

Leon knows something about potential. He realized his before many people knew his name. On Feb. 15, 1978, Leon, then unheard of, beat Muhammad Ali and claimed the world heavyweight title.

But Leon might have had the fastest rise and decline in the history of boxing. He faced Ali in a re-

match on Sept. 15, 1978, and lost. Leon's career sputtered out with a 25-17 record.

But what he accomplished that one Friday night on national television still attracts autograph seekers. Leon signed many Tuesday night. Whenever Darryl fights, people ask him about his father.

"I watched his performance against Ali three or four times on tape," Darryl said. "It was a great performance. He fought his idol and beat him."

Darryl wants to drop down to supermiddleweight and one day claim a world title, too. He trains every day and when his father isn't busy, he gets advice from him.

"There is no doubt, I want to be a world champion," Darryl said. "Boxing runs in the family."

Darryl is not the only son of Leon who is boxing. Corey Spinks won the 1997 National Golden Gloves title at 147 pounds. Leon said he still loves boxing and has high hopes for his sons.

"They can be better than me," Leon said.

Other bouts

■ Craig "Kid Fire" Cummings needed just 2 minutes, 43 seconds to knock down Mike Bryan three times in the supermiddleweight bout. Cummings improved to 35-3.

■ Kansas City lightweight Alvin Brown scored a four-round unanimous decision over Chuck Munson.

■ In what was billed as a women's grudge match, Sumya Anani destroyed Stacy Prestage, scoring a fourth-round knockout.

■ Lightweight Jimmy Joe Zeikle scored a six-round unanimous decision over Kenny Durham.

■ Kansas City's Mary Ortega scored a majority decision over Tulsa's Brenda Rouse. Tommy Morrison worked in Rouse's corner.

■ It took Hector Camacho Jr. just 55 seconds to defeat Lighten Lynn Laddy.