



**JEONG
SOOK
LEE**

**UNCONVENTIONAL
TANG SOO DO
MASTER
TEACHES
WORLD-RANKED
BOXER**

Many of our finest full-contact captains and kings have gone to the boxing gym to improve their punching. World-ranked heavyweight boxing hopeful Pinklon Thomas, however, came to tang soo do master Jeong Sook Lee of Kent, Washington—not to learn how to kick, but remarkably, to learn how to punch!

Heavyweight boxer Pinklon Thomas shuffles and weaves his way around a small room, jabbing at an imaginary opponent. Trainer Jack Stafford moves in front of Thomas, giving instructions; manager Roland Jankelson and trainer Jeong Sook Lee stand to one side.

Thomas rests momentarily, then rises for another three-minute round. Stafford announces the objective—300 punches—as the boxer's face turns into a menacing visage and the rhythmic breathing begins. The left hand leads, a red glove riding Thomas' 76-inch reach and cracking the air. It is a deadly premonition of the right hand which may follow at any moment.

"Make 'em pop!," Stafford instructs. They do.

After three amateur fights and 14 professional victories (12 by KO), Thomas and his entourage are preparing for what might be the 22-year-old fighter's most important year. And if events follow Jankelson's schedule, Pinklon Thomas may be the next world heavyweight champion.

At six-foot-three, 220 pounds, Thomas is weighing in as the great Northwest Hope. *Ring Magazine* has ranked him eighth in the U.S. and 18th in the world; the World Boxing Council put him at 17th in the world in August 1980.

So what is so unusual about this story? It's just that the highly regarded heavyweight hopeful happens to train with the aforementioned Jeong Sook Lee, a highly regarded tang soo do master. And he is learning how to punch—not kick—from Master Lee.

Running with Lee at 5:30 a.m., Thomas puts in six to seven miles a day on the roads between his home in Des Moines and Federal Way, Washington. Thomas also works out at Lee's International Martial Art and Fitness Center, located between Federal Way and Kent.

Thomas and company first entered Lee's school for the specific reason of having good equipment to work with. Lee then became interested in the athlete and began demonstrating methods of conditioning and training which added a new dimension to the boxer's workouts.

One aspect Lee worked on was the boxer's stance. "They're too square sometimes," he explains. "What I'm trying to do is make his stance more sideways so he can have more extension, more reach, and less openings. More like angular movement."

Numbers reveal another basic change in Pinklon's fighting style. Before training with



JEONG SOOK LEE AT A GLANCE

Age: 34 **Birthdate:** January 13, 1947
Height: 5'10" **Weight:** 165 lbs.
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 3160 Kent, WA 98301

- 1947** — Born January 13, 1947 at Pu San, Korea.
- 1952** — Began instruction in tang soo do at the age of seven under the direction of Hwang Kee.
- 1956** — Earned first dan rank at the age of 10.
- 1968** — Moved to America, settling in Seattle, Wash., and opened his first studio in America, now inactive. Lee also taught at Auburn High School in Seattle.
- 1971** — Earned B.A. in Chemistry from the University of Washington.
 - Relocated to Pocatella, Idaho, opening his second studio.
 - Acted as chief self-defense instructor for the Idaho State Police Academy.
 - Entered M.A. program in Business Administration at Idaho State.
- 1974** — Was appointed to the board of directors of the newly formed U.S. Tang Soo Do Moo Duk Kwan Federation, overseeing two of the federation's nine regions in the U.S.
- 1976** — Relocated to Santa Barbara, Ca., opening his third studio.
- 1979** — Returned to Washington to reside, founding his fourth school, in Kent.
 - Opened another branch school in San Jose, Ca.
- 1980** — Opened his sixth school, in Seattle.

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Lee, Thomas threw 150 to 170 punches per round; now the heavyweight is working at a pace between 300-400 punches per round. The level of endurance Thomas is building toward "exceeds anything any other boxer is doing," says Jankelson. "Traditional boxing style dictates that punches be thrown in groups of four to seven. Lee's method breaks away from these limitations."

"My boxing style was hampered by irrelevant, unnecessary movement before training with Lee," says Thomas. Now the boxer's motion is coordinated with his punches, helping him to maintain proper balance.

Learning kicks is one thing, but when we heard a highly-ranked tang soo do master was teaching a pro boxer how to punch we had to see it to believe it. We did. In Thomas' last fight in April, in Seattle, we sat at ringside as the heavyweight absolutely destroyed his opponent by a first-round knockout. The performance was more like a demolition derby. Thomas' opponent never once hit him, and the fight was lucky to last past the national anthem.

Pinklon Thomas radiates a maturity that belies his age. That maturity, no doubt, comes from a Pontiac, Michigan youth filled with problems, particularly drugs, an obstacle over which he won a unanimous victory. But most importantly it reflects a single-minded purpose to be the best in the world at what he does.

Thomas' goal is to become the world heavyweight boxing champion and many boxing experts believe he is the best young heavyweight on the world boxing scene. He has climbed to lofty heights in the world ratings after only 14 professional fights and a three-year boxing tenure. Thomas was featured in *Sports Illustrated* last year as one of the world's four top heavyweight prospects.

Thomas made his pro debut on August 29, 1978, having had just three amateur bouts and winning the 1978 Seattle Golden Gloves Heavyweight Championship. Thomas then went on to win his next 12 bouts by KO, before winning a unanimous decision, in August 1980, to compile his current undefeated record. The August bout, against Jerry Williams in Las Vegas in a nationally televised ESPN card, was a testing ground for Thomas' sheer determination. He fought the greatest part of the 10-round match with both hands fractured! He has since undergone surgery, and the hands appeared to have had no problems pounding his Seattle foe into oblivion last April.

The unconventional tang soo do master, Jeong Sook Lee, is no stage prop in the Thomas entourage, but a bona fide trainer. "I have a boxing contract, and just like any other trainer, I get a percentage of Pinklon's purses," he explains.

As 1981 unfolds, perhaps Thomas, the Northwest's great boxing hope, will be challenging champions Larry Holmes or Mike Weaver on network television. Look to the corner of Thomas and there you will find the unorthodox Jeong Sook Lee, the man who helped take the Asian martial arts to Western boxing.

