Branch Student Is Olympic Champ

A lack of size and weight has given Canton and the Kent State Stark County Branch an Olympic Gold Medal-winning boxer. Ronnie Harris began his boxing career when he discovered that he was too small to play football for his high school, Canton McKinley. One of the first to learn of Ron’s dedication and prowess in the ring was Joe Mikes of the Canton Police Boys Club. Ronnie defeated him in his first fight in the 1963 Canton Golden Gloves Tournament at Memorial Auditorium.

Ron’s success continued and in 1966 some changes that were to alter his career occurred. At this point, Ron began fighting in the open division and changed weight classification from the 126-lb. to 132-lb. division. These changes gave him a chance to enter Amateur Athletic Union competition and the National Golden Gloves Tournament.

In AAU bouts that year, Ronnie won the first of three consecutive AAU national 132-lb. titles.

He also made the National Golden Gloves competition in ‘63.

In 1967 a Golden Gloves title in Milwaukee opened the way for Olympic trials in Toledo and a place on the 1968 team.

The rest is history. With a gold medal and an amateur record of 54 fights (50 won, 4 lost by split decision) Ron is closing the book on his boxing career.

He feels that since he can go no farther in amateur boxing – and a professional career wouldn’t be of interest to him – now is the “best time to quit.”

Harris Seeks Career In Medicine

Olympic gold medal in hand, Ron Harris is set to move on to his primary goal in life—becoming a brain surgeon. Ron will be helped toward that goal by a $1,000 scholarship awarded him by the students, faculty and advisory board of the Stark Branch at a recognition assembly November 1, 1968.

Ron, a charter member of Phi Delta Psi fraternity, says, “I plan to stay at the Branch as long as you’ll have me.”

Ron has been named to an Olympics committee organized by the Kennedy Foundation to create opportunities for sports training and athletic competition for retarded children.

“MY TOUGHEST FIGHT at the Olympics was with John Stracey of Great Britain,” says Ron, seen here landing a solid right to Stracey’s face. Ron went on to defeat defending champion Josef Grudzen of Poland in the championship bout.

Harris Enjoys Close Family Ties

What kind of life does a gold medal winner have?

For Ronnie Harris, it’s one of closeness, understanding and cooperation.

“I come from a big family,” Ron explained. He has six sisters and one brother.

Ron’s devotion to his family was reflected by several telephone calls he made home during his stay in Mexico.

In the October 28, 1968, issue of the Canton Repository, Ronnie was quoted as saying, “that one was for by brother, Jeff,” after he had advanced to the quarter finals and won the bronze medal.

After winning the quarter finals, Ron called home to tell his mother, Geraldine Harris, “if I don’t go any farther, my silver medal is for my father.”

When it became evident Ron would go all the way, he called home again and told him mother, “I’ve got one more thing to do, Mom. If I win the gold medal its for you.”

Ron’s relation to his father is a close one for Mr. Harris instructed his son during sessions at the Canton Police Boys Club.

His father also traveled to ringside in Mexico City to lend Ron his support during the Olympics.
Queen Reflects

Leslyn Hiple represented Ohio in the Miss America Pageant at Atlantic City in September.

"The contest was a lot different from what I expected. It's a professional television show... not at all like a typical beauty queen pageant," Les explained.

Practices were held every afternoon and evening and there were only a few free hours during one afternoon. "My chaperon and I walked up the Boardwalk on my only free afternoon.

"Security was very tight. Police were there at all times and the girls were not allowed to talk to anyone not even members of their families," Les said.

"The girls were nice at the Miss America Pageant, but I had a lot more fun at Cedar Point. Of course, I'm prejudiced," laughed Les.

"I really enjoyed meeting all the girls and I'm so glad to have had such a great experience," she said.

Leslyn Plans To Major In Biology

Beauty and brains will mix with biology if the dream of Miss Ohio Leslyn Hiple, comes true.

A bachelor of science degree in biology is the first step toward her goal of teaching biology at the college level.

Les' immediate plans include class work at the Stark Branch winter quarter and personal appearances at local beauty pageants across the state in spring.

Les says she will attend either Kent State of the University of Florida to complete her undergraduate work.

She dreams of marriage and children "someday."

Whatever the future, the Miss Ohio crown will be her last beauty title. She now knows what it's all about, and, "once is fun and also enough."