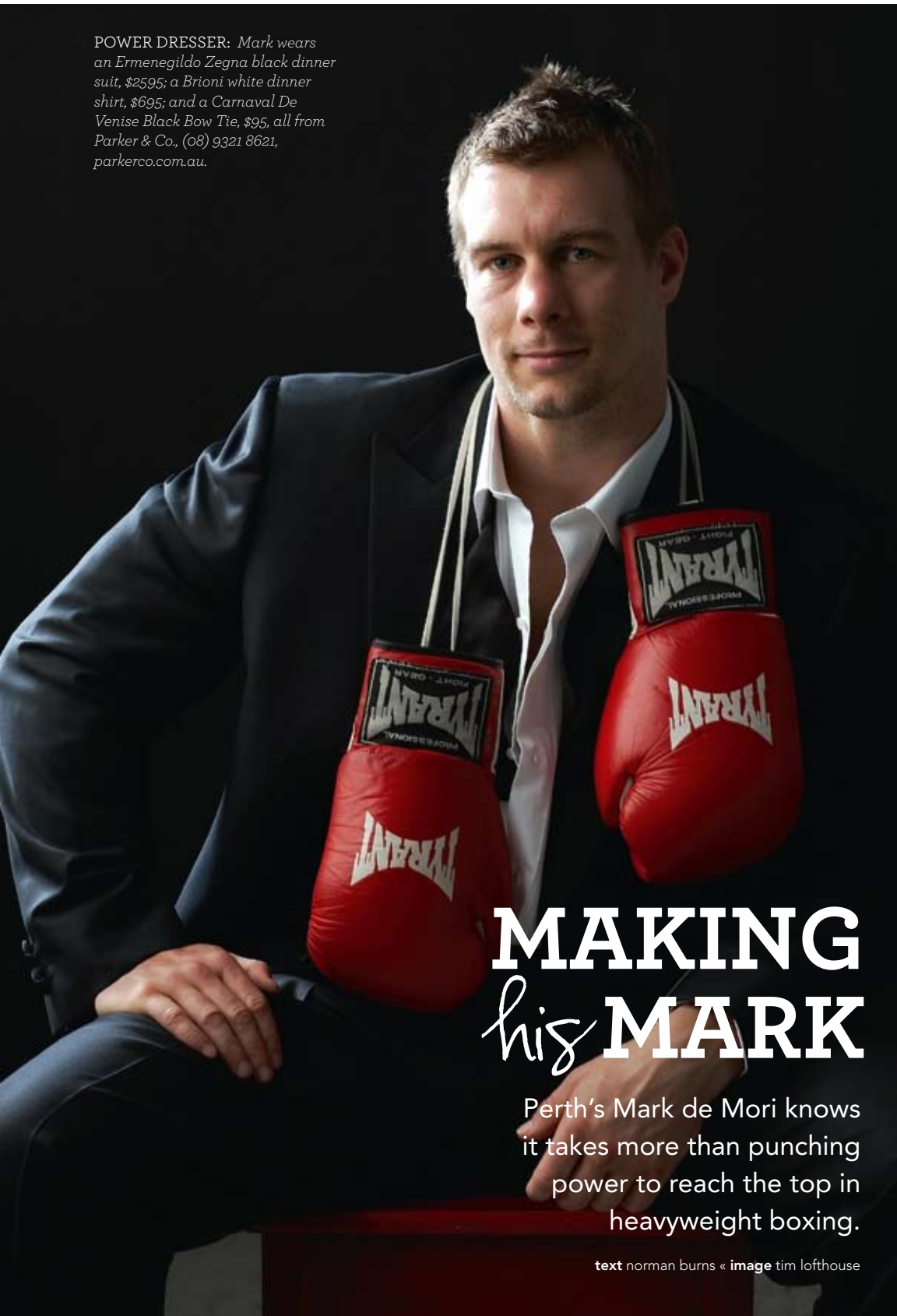


PORTFOLIO

for men

POWER DRESSER: Mark wears an Ermenegildo Zegna black dinner suit, \$2595; a Brioni white dinner shirt, \$695; and a Carnival De Venise Black Bow Tie, \$95, all from Parker & Co., (08) 9321 8621, parkerco.com.au.



MAKING his MARK

Perth's Mark de Mori knows it takes more than punching power to reach the top in heavyweight boxing.

text norman burns « image tim lofthouse

Men's style	88
Beach boys	91
Passions: surfing	92
Aloha shirts	93
Ticktalk	94
Success: John Rothwell	96
Sports diary	99
Books for blokes	100
Thinking man	102

In hindsight, the punches that stopped Mark de Mori – and his fledgling pro-boxing career – in his tracks in 2004 were the best thing that could have happened to him.

He was, in boxing parlance, “caught cold” by journeyman John “Digger” Wyborne – when a fighter is not 100 percent mentally prepared for the coming stoush.

“He’d had 40 pro fights and I’d had six but I was tired going into the fight; I was even worried that warming up would leave me exhausted,” says the 105kg Perth 27-year-old. Wyborne’s flurry of first round blows left Mark seeing stars but defeat opened the heavyweight’s eyes to just what it would take to become the best in his craft.

“Before that loss I had a lot of hype around me but I went back to virtually start from scratch. I changed my style and dedication and now I’m a totally different fighter,” he says.

Mark, now ranked 17 in the world under the World Boxing Council banner, hasn’t looked back since. His pro-record now stands at 16 wins, one loss and one draw. As a teenager he idolised West Coast footballer Glen Jakovich and professional wrestlers such as The Ultimate Warrior but got hooked on boxing after seeing Mike Tyson fight

|| Continued on page 100



**“SOMETIMES YOU
PLAY THE MATADOR;
SOMETIMES YOU
PLAY THE BULL.”**

MAKING HIS MARK « from page 87

England’s Frank Bruno. By the time he was 19 he was competing in the amateur 91kg division but then gave the sport away for two years.

He took to weight training to bulk up and build his strength, returning to the ring and turning pro at 22. Now under the wing of Sydney manager Ted Allen, Mark believes he has the ability, discipline and determination for a real crack at boxing’s big time where “the top five percent make 90 percent of the money”.

More importantly, others in the at-times arcane world of the ring also believe in *The Dominator* (Mark’s moniker in the ring). Flamboyant US promoter Don King (of the gravity-challenged hair) has signed him to a three-year contract. It’s a deal which means invaluable exposure on the incredibly lucrative US boxing circuit, a far cry from the fight nights at suburban halls where most pro-boxing in WA takes place (Danny Green excepted of course).

“You couldn’t meet a nicer guy or have a more professional boxer on your books; we’re chasing the dream,” says Ted, who at the time of writing was poised to announce a big fight in Las Vegas for his charge. The winner was likely to get a coveted title shot at giant Russian Nikolai Valuev (he comes in at a staggering 149kg and 2.1m tall – that’s seven foot two inches in the

TALE OF THE TAPE

NAME Mark de Mori

ALIAS The Dominator

AGE 27

HEIGHT 188cm

WEIGHT 105kg

BORN Perth

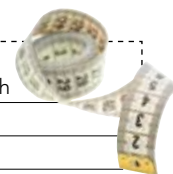
LIVES Scarborough, Perth

STANCE Orthodox

DIVISION Heavyweight

RANKING 17 on World Boxing Association list

RECORD (as of 1/10/09): 16 wins - 1 loss - 1 draw



old money) for the World Boxing Association heavyweight championship. Ted tells me many of Mark’s fights can be seen on YouTube, so I check out a bunch. One pits Mark against a much bigger opponent who looks like he tuned up for the bout by binging at the Krispy Kreme donut wholesale outlet.

But the commentators note, without a hint of irony, that despite “not being in shape” Robert Kooser has flattened several recent opponents.

Mark keeps Donut Man at jab’s length, wary of that rogue punch, but as the first round nears the end, unleashes a devastating blow to the big fella’s midriff. Kooser drops to his knees and is counted out.

The other fights though pit Mark against much-better credentialed, and more chiselled, opponents. His bout against classy American Ed Mahone, a one-time title contender, proved Mark could really foot it with the big guys.

Mahone was expected to win easily, but the post-Wyborne Mark had done his homework and won a unanimous points decision. Now he scrutinises every bit of intelligence and video footage of opponents before a fight, knowing he can adapt his game plan to their style.

“Sometimes you play the matador; sometimes you play the bull. Mahone had won 23 out of 24 fights by knockout so I became the matador,” says Mark, who is savvy enough to know there is more to boxing than being able to throw (or take) a punch. Australians don’t care too much for those who showboat or big-note themselves, but showmanship is a huge part of the US boxing scene.

“Promoters care about what reaction you get from the fans, not how good you are. Don King almost never watches fights that aren’t televised but he came to see me on the undercard and saw the emotional reaction of the crowd,” Mark says. Taking a leaf out of the outrageous hyped-up world of wrestling trash-talk, Mark vowed at a press conference before a recent US bout that he was going to “torture and punish” his opponent. The press corps loved it and Mark played “villain” to the hilt before dispatching his rival.

“It’s theatre; outside of the ring everyone who knows me knows I am the most laidback, easy going person you could meet. But when you’re on the undercard you have to make an impact.”

Boxers certainly need speed, stamina, power and fitness but it’s the “x-factor” of discipline that perhaps makes the best stand out from the crowd.

And discipline Mark has in spades. He trains himself; six days a week, weights, gym work and sparring. Mark is, however, a realist when it comes to the hazards of his profession.

“Boxing is a dangerous sport but it is a case of risk versus reward. The longer you are in it, the greater the risk of serious injury. I know if I get knocked out in the next fight or two it could be all over. But I’m not worried, unlike other boxers, about fading away into obscurity,” says Mark, who has plans to run his own personal training business after boxing.

But with many heavyweights fighting well into their 30s, *The Dominator’s* dream of a world title belt remains very much alive. **em**
See markdemori.com.au.