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## Shannan Taylor Overdose Highlights the Link Between Boxing and Addiction

By Steve Sadoka, Contributor Nov 30, 2011

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Shannan Taylor Overdose Highlights the Link Between Boxing and Addiction

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Oscar De La Hoya admitted he had considered suicide after battling with cocaine addiction

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The **critical condition** of World Middleweight Boxing Champion, Shannan Taylor, from a suspected drug overdose, highlights the prevalence of drug and alcohol abuse within the sport of boxing.

Shannan's problems with addiction have been documented in the past and he is one of a number of high level boxers who have battled against the demons of addiction.

**Oscar De La Hoya**, a 10-time World Champion and known as the "Golden Boy," recently had a stint in rehab following his own personal problems with addiction. **He says:**

"My drug of choice was cocaine and alcohol... it took me to a place where I felt safe, it took me to a place I felt as if nobody can say



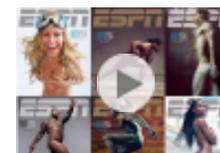
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anything to me. I don't have the courage to take my own life but I was thinking about it."

Two other recent World Champions, Ricky Hatton, former World Welterweight Champion, and [Kelly Pavlik](#), former World Middleweight Champion, have also had recent spells in rehab because of their battle with alcohol and drugs.

Hatton was famously exposed by the now defunct *News of The World* snorting cocaine and [admitted](#) that drugs and alcohol had become a problem along with depression.

Spencer Fearon of Hard Knocks Boxing, a former boxer himself, and now one of the UK's biggest promoters commented on Taylor:

"It is a tragedy that Shannan is in such a condition, particularly as he had recently become a World Champion. What it highlights is how deep these problems are in the boxing world and how the recent initiative taken by HKB in helping other similarly troubled boxers seek treatment is so necessary."



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Kelly Pavlik has admitted to struggling with alcoholism

the amount of boxers who were suffering from addiction related problems,

"Oftentimes, a boxer who is suffering from addiction is the last person to ask for help, a fighter's pride is not just something that stays in the ring. It is the job of those who work with the boxer, whether that be a promoter, manager or trainer to look after a boxer's health and if that involves sending them to receive treatment then so be it."

Fearon decided to work with a treatment centre in Chiang Mai called The Cabin because he felt it was important to find somewhere outside of the UK, and sending boxers and ex-boxers to a state-of-the-art facility in Thailand is much cheaper than it would be in the West:

"I thought it was important to find a centre that allowed fighters to get away from their current environment and entourage and be able to be

Hard Knocks Boxing is one of the first organizations within the sport to proactively look to address the issue of addiction. Fearon recently teamed up with an addiction treatment centre in Thailand because he felt action needed to be taken to address



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treated in full confidentiality away from the media."

Alastair Mordey, Programme Director at The Cabin, has got extensive experience of working with former addicts, many of whom have been either boxers or professional athletes of some description. He believes that there is a link between sports with high rates of head trauma such as boxing and addiction:

"Recent evidence shows that sports such as boxing and ice hockey, where there is continued impact to the head can effect the incidence of addiction. What is caused is scientifically known as chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) but in boxing circles is still called dementia pugilistica.

It is thought that CTE effects the part of the brain that controls memory, impulse control, emotions and depression. It is these controls, or lack of, that effect the incidence of addiction."

He is concerned that because a culture of not complaining during situations of immense stress is endemic in boxing, fighters are much more reluctant than other people would be to seek help for problems away from the ring.

"It is very important that fighters and other sportsmen should be

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provided with the necessary options of treatment. By nature, many sportsmen are taught not to show any weakness so it is going to take a cultural shift within sport to stop such incidents as have developed with Shannan Taylor from happening again."

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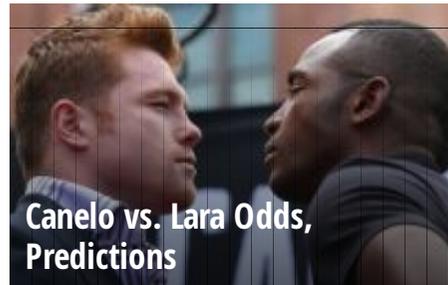
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