

# Battered boxer: Don't be like me

## Fighter eager to share his cautionary tale

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Ray Ciancaglini is doing everything in his power to make sure young athletes do not end up like him.

When he was a 16-year-old boxer, Ciancaglini suffered what he later learned was a concussion. He had blurred vision and was dazed and ended up finishing the fight in a fog. He woke up the next day with a headache and feeling fatigued.

In an era where concussions weren't a big deal and in a sport where toughness is a requirement, he came back the next

### CONTACT CIANCAGLINI

To have Ray Ciancaglini speak to your group, call him at (315) 585-0001. He is willing to travel to talk and there is no charge. More information is available at [thesecondimpact.com](http://thesecondimpact.com).

week and boxed again, suffering a second concussion that changed his life.

This is what is now known as second-impact syndrome, which occurs when an athlete suffers a second head injury before the first injury has healed.

"I was an honor student and well-behaved," said Ciancaglini, now 60 years old and living in Romulus. "After the second concussion my world fell apart. I started failing all my courses, sleeping 14 hours a day and had little behavior problems. I couldn't understand what was going on."

Ciancaglini was encouraged to gut out his issues and pursue boxing. He stayed with boxing for four years, but his reflexes began to slow and he fought for the last time in 1972.

He wanted to be a teacher, but he failed out of college because he couldn't remember anything he was taught. He tried to work a job in construction, but the light bothered him and it was dangerous for him to be around heavy equipment.

Ciancaglini finally found what seemed to be an ideal job working in the dark room at Eastman Kodak, but eventually



Ray Ciancaglini wants everyone to know about the dangers of concussions. Now 60, Ciancaglini said his 'world fell apart' after his second concussion. PHOTO PROVIDED

he forgot how to do the tasks of his job and developed tremors. He was diagnosed with Parkinson's Syndrome and dementia because he didn't let his concussions heal properly, forcing him to retire at age 44.

Ciancaglini's efforts have helped push lawmakers to protect athletes from second-impact syndrome. He also does his part by visiting schools, colleges, youth teams and high school teams to tell his story.

"It just makes me happy to know I can make a difference," said Ciancaglini. "I don't want to see anybody suffer with

these unnecessary disabilities because it's so unnecessary. It's 100 percent avoidable."

Part of his message is to let young athletes know they're not alone when they're hurt or after they're hurt. He also stresses that high school athletes must help each other out.

"We start out with zero tolerance for peer pressure and to step up to help your buddy out there," he said. "Coaches only have two eyes and can't see everything. If you know your buddy's had his bell rung, you have to help him out because he's not thinking clearly."