

# BITE

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gal Bites he uses for training and fights.

He says they protect his mouth and jaw while providing a better bite.

"It's a power bite," Holmes said.

He said he has "no problem breathing" while using the mouthpiece and recommends the guard to other athletes.

Holmes agrees that Tyson would have had a difficult time spitting out the Bengal Bite because it provides suction to the teeth.

"But boxers can find other ways to bite," he said, perhaps using their bottom teeth.

## Been there, done that

As a boxer at Notre Dame University, DeMartino knew about mouth guards that prevent athletes from breathing through their mouths as they bite down on the piece.

He learned early to clench his teeth or risk serious jaw injury from a blow to the face. Yet he had difficulty breathing through his mouthpiece while trying to keep his teeth clenched.

Three weeks into his training, he got popped in the face while holding open his mouth for air. He could not move his jaw for three days despite wearing a standard custom mouthpiece when he was hit.

Today, he has permanent jaw damage.

He later became a dentist, entering his father's practice, where his wife, Dr. Nelida Garcia, also is a dentist.

His dad, Dr. Gaeton J. DeMartino, made standard mouth guards for Holmes since DeMartino was

a boy.

DeMartino's own mouth guard experiences in college boxing and high school wrestling piqued his curiosity — maybe there was a better way to design mouth guards.

He began to ask Holmes and other boxers what they liked and disliked about their mouthpieces.

They, like the college boxer, could not breathe through their mouths while properly using them.

The Bengal Bite resulted. The moniker arose from a Notre Dame boxing tournament called the "Bengal Bouts."

## Word of mouth guard

Word of the new mouthpiece has traveled to sparring partners of Lewis and Holmes and other boxers. Athletes from DeMartino's alma mater, Phillipsburg High School, are using them.

Bengal Bite Laboratories was created downstairs from the dental practice on Roseberry Street four months ago to accommodate current and anticipated demand.

The laboratories will "specifically produce, market and distribute the Bengal Bite mouthpiece line," DeMartino said.

DeMartino wouldn't hazard a guess as to where the Bengal Bite will lead. Right now, he's simply having fun providing protection for a man he characterized as "a childhood hero," and other athletes. "It thrills me to see (Holmes) actually using my mouthpiece in the ring."

Both Holmes and Lewis plan to use their mouth guards in their upcoming 1999 fights against George Foreman and Holyfield, respectively.

And who knows? Maybe Iron Mike will be the dentist's next customer.