

August 6 Card To Support Vital Community Project

Written by Greg Smith
Tuesday, 26 July 2005 19:00

On August 6 at the Grand Victoria Casino in Rising Sun, Indiana, Kasse-Tubbs Productions will present a six bout fight card featuring several Cincinnati-based boxers. Included on the card are Tony and Nate Tubbs, 2000 Olympian Dante Craig, and former cruiserweight title challenger Ravea Springs.

Promoter Greg Kasse and Nate Tubbs have put the card together to support a tremendously important project they've been working on for over a year. In fact, I wish I would've been able to write this article when the project started, because that's when I unsuccessfully attempted to track down Nate on the West End of Cincinnati after the *Cincinnati Enquirer* announced that Nate was opening a gym and youth program on Linn Street.

In the end, however, I guess good things come to those who practice perseverance and patience. What I witnessed when I visited Nate and Greg at their operation is one of the most impressive, authoritative, and ambitious projects I've seen in boxing since the Archie Moore "Any Boy Can" program was implemented decades ago. Nate and Greg's program is also somewhat similar to Joe Hand's Gym in Philadelphia. This isn't just a worthy cause; it's a well planned, highly professional, and crucial community project that will impact the lives of a generation of youth and beyond. Nate and Greg not only have their hearts and minds in the right place, they're planning and executing their project as visionary realists. They know what they have to do, and they do it every day. As Greg stated to me on the phone before we all met on the West End: "A lot of people talk about it, but we're doing it."

That's a prototypical Midwestern understatement.

As mentioned above, I initially attempted to contact Nate over a year ago. When the *Cincinnati Enquirer* announced the opening of the gym, I emailed the reporter who broke the story and inquired about the exact location of the operation. I got a vague response that it was somewhere on Linn Street. When I asked for a phone number, I got no response at all. A few days later, I drove down to Linn Street in search of the gym.

The West End of Cincinnati is one of the rougher areas of a troubled city. In 2001, Cincinnati erupted in riots after police shot and killed a local youth. Most of the rioting occurred in the Over-The-Rhine section of the city, but some of the rioting spilled over into the West End. Cincinnati has been in a recovery and healing mode ever since the riots, but true progress has been difficult. At the moment, Cincinnati follows only Detroit in the United States regarding the percentage of residents moving out of the city limits. In Cincinnati, we call it "The Donut Effect." As the city shrinks, the suburbs are growing. Cincinnati is now a city of approximately 320,000 residents, but the metropolitan area is now close to 1.8 million. Needless to say, the tax base is eroding, businesses are relocating to the suburbs and northern Kentucky, and crime is becoming an ever increasing problem.

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Indeed, when I drove down to the West End at this time last year, things didn't look too good. I drove down Ezzard Charles Drive, made a right hand turn heading north on Linn Street, and looked for a sign for the gym. In a time period of 15 minutes, three different police cars pulled up behind me. None of the officers pulled me over, but they studied me carefully as I drove up and down Linn Street. Interestingly, the farther north I drove on Linn Street, I found a startling contradiction: No police cars and aggressive, open drug dealing. I figured that the police were probably doing a lot of undercover work and surveillance in this area, and concentrated their force on the southern part of Linn Street to keep the dealers away from local businesses. All told, it was both an enlightening and unfortunate experience.

One year later, some things have changed, but the area is still struggling to reach appreciable revitalization. Nate Tubbs and Greg Kasse are playing a massive role in that regard. They're not waiting for the city to take back their community; they're doing it through old fashioned hard work and self-reliance.

The Nate Tubbs Group Home & Amateur Boxing Program for Teenage Boys is located in a strip mall just north of Ezzard Charles Drive on Linn Street. Nate is President of the organization, and local promoter and contractor Greg Kasse is the Vice President. Their operation is a certified nonprofit organization. Nate and Greg have also formed the aforementioned promotional company: Kasse-Tubbs Productions. Their roles are reversed in that regard with Greg functioning as President and Nate as Vice President.

It's important to note that both companies are interrelated. In short, on one side of the coin Nate and Greg are forging a vital, integrated community function for local youth. The boxing program is simply a piece of a complex pie. Beyond boxing, Nate and Greg's program will encompass an educational and vocational training center, a group home for troubled teens, anger management classes, a tutoring program in conjunction with the West End Library, guest speakers, extra sports and physical conditioning programs, academic monitoring and follow-up, as well as college preparatory work. Nate is also exploring an opportunity to create an innovative private correctional facility.

On the other side of the coin, Greg and Nate are trying to bring boxing back to Cincinnati. Cincinnati has a rich and deep boxing history, but like Detroit, the boxing assembly line isn't functioning like the well oiled machine it once was. As *Cincinnati Enquirer* writer John Erardi pointed out before last year's Olympic Games, Cincinnati has placed six fighters on the last four Olympic teams. Moreover, the Cincinnati metropolitan area still has a tremendous amount of boxing gyms, but help is needed to get the boxing factory to run at an optimal level again.

On the surface, Cincinnati is feeding the amateur system with quality fighters at an impressive rate. In the pro ranks, however, Cincinnati is no longer in the age of Ezzard Charles, Aaron Pryor, Tony Tubbs, Tim Austin and Larry Donald. Tubbs, Austin and Donald are still active fighters, but recent Olympians Dante Craig and Ron Siler haven't been able to get their pro careers off the ground like the champions of the past. Dante is trying to resurrect his career, and Siler is searching for a promoter. Talented Ricardo Williams Jr. was recently sentenced to several years in prison for cocaine trafficking. The depth chart needs more depth.

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The basic function and structure of the boxing program is for Greg and Nate to steer more youth into their gym, continue the tremendous amateur tradition of Cincinnati, bring quality, seasoned fighters into the pro ranks, and revitalize the local boxing scene. As Nate told me, he wants the gym to function like Kronk did a few years ago, but with a broader societal focus. With Tony at Nate's side, the Tubbs brothers have about 50 years of boxing experience. Greg Kasse is the promotional X factor.

It could and should happen.

Last week I met Greg Kasse on Linn Street, and interviewed Nate, Dante Craig and Ravea Springs at the gym. Nate was just finishing up a workout with legendary Cincinnati trainer Billy Joiner. At first glance, I didn't recognize Nate. I have a tape of his vicious 1994 second round knockout of Corrie Sanders, and Nate appeared lighter in the gym than he did when he took out Sanders in South Africa. Nate hasn't fought for seven years, but he looked good pounding various combinations from different angles into Joiner's oversized mitts in 90 degree heat.

A few days later I interviewed Tony over the phone. In between my interviews with Nate, Ravea, Dante and Tony, I had an extended phone conversation with Nate and Tony's mom. What I initially expected to be a 30 second conversation naturally evolved into 30 minutes. Unfortunately, I didn't tape the conversation because it wasn't intended to be an interview. The best thing I can say about my phone interaction with Mrs. Tubbs is that it was both fun and fascinating. Bright, energetic and warm-hearted, Mrs. Tubbs can lift the spirits of anyone having a bad day. We talked about Nate, Tony, Cincinnati, social issues, and boxing. In short, she's a special lady.

Below is the transcript of my interviews with Nate, Ravea, Dante and Tony. Unfortunately, the transcript doesn't completely capture the tone and nature of the interaction I had with all of the men. Nate played a significant role in raising Dante and Ravea. Accordingly, all three men are respectful, professional, and decent. They were a pleasure to interview. Nate is especially intelligent, engaging and enterprising. As Greg Kasse stated, Nate would be a great boxing commentator. I think he would be a wonderful guest host for ESPN2's Friday Night Fights. He is energetic, but also possesses an unusual wisdom of both boxing and the game of life.

Furthermore, during the interviews, employees of the operation often walked by. All appeared happy, pleasant and cordial. It was obvious that Nate and Greg's operation functions as a team. Everyone is on the same page with the same vision. Tony was fun and great to talk to on the phone. I will be meeting Tony in the near future with Greg Kasse, and we'll probably talk more about his past, present and future at that time.

As an added note, I have personally committed myself to this program on a volunteer basis. I'm currently contacting various sources for additional funding, and will volunteer my time in various other capacities as well. If you are interested in donating money, equipment or your time to this project, please feel free to contact me and I'll put you in touch with the right people.

The Nate Tubbs Group Home and Amateur Boxing Program for Teenage Boys is located at:

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1525 Linn Street
Cincinnati, Ohio 45214.

Nate Tubbs Interview

TSS: You started your career in 1987. The last time you fought was in 1998. During your career, you were a sparring partner for Tyson.

Nate Tubbs: For just about my whole career.

TSS: You knocked out Corrie Sanders in 1994. I've got the tape. Nice right hand on the button. He took the ten-count, but it could've been a thirty-count. Your professional record is 17-4 (13 KO's). Is this the start of a comeback, or is this simply a way to support the group home/gym?

Nate Tubbs: Well, you can look at it in a variety of ways. On the strength that, I'm 40 years old, and at this point in my career I'm strictly a businessman. I think I enjoy the business part more now, more than the training and fighting part. I feel willing to do it, but my passion is more into the business part. My whole career was with Tyson, so I worked a lot. Being with one of the superstars of the 1980s and 1990s, and me being an intelligent fighter, you learn a lot of things and pick things up and you look to advance in a different way more than just fighting. If you look at the average fighter, their main focus is just fighting. I took it in another direction. My main thing is to learn the business. Right now, I think I've learned it very well.

TSS: On the subject of Tyson, you said you sparred with him for most of your career. On that note, in your opinion how did he change as a fighter over time?

Nate Tubbs: Me and Tyson went through the amateurs together and became friends. After he fought my brother, we finally ran across each other again, and he asked me to come to camp with him. I was with him up until the first fight with Holyfield. I think what's going on with Tyson is that he had a lot of "yes people" around him more concerned with getting paid than having passion for Mike to win the fights. They were more "yes people" than anything else. I had a misunderstanding in camp, because when Mike fought Holyfield I really believed Mike would beat Holyfield. I felt like I was in the best shape of my life at the time, because working with Mike you had to stay right to last as long as I did. So, I think what happened with Mike is that he started lacking, and started to believe he would knock Holyfield out in the first round and didn't train properly. He trained with me three rounds a day for seven weeks. I was pissed off about that. I [thought] me and his trainers had a misunderstanding. We ended up having a little altercation and I ended up getting put out of camp. It was more passion for me than just the money. I was paid very well.

TSS: From a styles standpoint, in terms of what Mike was like in 1989 compared to 1996, how did he change in the ring?

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Nate Tubbs: Well, I think Mike is still trying to box. Mike's fights in the 1980s were based on pressure, a lot of head movement, and fast hands. Now he's waiting to counter and things like that. The guys today aren't scared. Everybody has it in their mind that if they can just stand up for four rounds, they got Mike. There was a lot of talk about steroid use and this and that. Mike Tyson just cheated himself. He came to the point where he thought he was unbeatable in his mind. He started doing things he shouldn't have done. I think the worst thing that happened to him is that he and Kevin Rooney broke up. Rooney was the guy that pushed him and demanded things from him. Mike respected him. He gave Kevin Rooney what was asked from him. After Kevin Rooney, Mike had guys around him who were more "yes men." Regarding Kevin Rooney, it wasn't about the money with him. He and Mike came up in the same house together, and it was more passion with him. He wanted Mike to be on top and stay on top. That's what happened. I think Mike got out of there and got the negative people around him. They were just around him for his money and what they could get out of him.

TSS: George Foreman was recently quoted saying that he thinks Mike still has a future in boxing. Do you think he should fight again?

Nate Tubbs: Honestly, I do. I think Mike should go back to Kevin. Whatever problems he and Kevin Rooney have, they need to resolve it. Kevin knows what peaks Mike. He knows just the right things to do to get all the negativity away from around Mike and eliminate his entourage. This is the worst generation of heavyweights as there's ever been. I think Mike could run through all of the heavyweights. I feel like Mike could've beat Lennox Lewis, but the Mike Tyson I know wasn't fighting that night. He stood there and let Lennox Lewis do whatever he wanted to do. I think Mike lost his confidence. I think if he got his confidence back and really believed in himself again, I think he could be the superstar he used to be in the 1980s and early 1990s.

TSS: In terms of your career, how would you assess your career as a professional fighter? How would you grade your career? Are you happy with your career?

Nate Tubbs: Well, I'm not happy with my career because I felt like I had the potential to be a champion. I think that's why I can relate to Mike so much, because my brother was a champion and I came up through the limelight. I was spoiled. I had money myself. I got married at 18, and I owned a lot of properties. I had a real estate development company for over twenty years. The whole time I was with Mike I was buying a house every week with the money he was paying me. My thing was that boxing wasn't my priority. If boxing would've been my priority, I think I would've accomplished a lot more.

I got motivated for the Corrie Sanders fight because after analyzing the guys he beat, these were the kind of guys I was in camp with. I looked at tapes of Corrie Sanders, and I just couldn't believe he could beat me. They gave me two months to get ready, and I have a good defense. I know I'm a puncher, and I'm a converted southpaw. I know how to fight southpaws. I fought my whole amateur career southpaw. I'm a switched fighter. I've never had problems with southpaws. I'll knock out all southpaws. I know how to trap them. I can force them to the opposite side. When I came along I had good teaching.

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That's something they don't have in boxing anymore – especially here in Cincinnati. We don't have good trainers anymore. Right now I've got Billy Joiner training me, and he's one of the best trainers in the city. Billy is a guy who had an impeccable career himself. If he asks you for something, you gotta give it to him. He's been pushing me and I've lost about 50 pounds. I'm in the best shape of my life.

Like I said, though, I'm a businessman. I'm not expecting to continue for a long time. This is a lot of hard work. You have to focus on just this. I'm involved with the kids, and I have a non-profit organization. I'm running a bingo business, and running a boxing gym. It's just too much when you're running a business. There are a lot of decisions I'm going to make. I'm making a lot of sacrifices, but then I end up neglecting the business.

There's a possibility I might not fight after this fight. It's a balance. I don't have to do it. I've done a lot of good things with my money. I bought a strip mall. I'm ok financially. I've got some good business ventures going. I'm in the process of doing a private penitentiary. Not to hurt people or have them locked up, but to teach them. I'm a product of the system, and I know what's needed. I know what you have to eliminate so you don't have repeat offenders. So we're looking to build a penitentiary in the next few years. 3000 beds. We'll input a mandatory trade school.

My oldest son got ten years for a conspiracy case. I'm in the process of trying to get him an appeal to get him out. I've got him in a school there, and trying to do the right things. If he's got ten years and I can't get him out, make the best of the ten years. Make it to his advantage. I'm doing some things so that when he does get out, he can do his own business and he can be kind of set-up. I'll keep him with me. That's the most important thing. What fathers need to do is lead their sons.

One advantage with the nonprofit organization is that the kids can relate to me because I used to be one of them. I've been out there on the block. They respect it coming from me a lot better. I'm leading by example. You don't have to do certain things to get ahead in life; all you have to do is be willing to sacrifice. I think it's something good that we're doing right now. I'm very sincere about it. With my partner, Greg Kasse, it's good to have a partner on the same page with you. It's not just boxing. We'll also be doing football for teenage boys. We'll have mentors. Right now, we're starting out slow, but we're gradually putting everything together. So far, we've got our gym. We've got 30 kids coming up here everyday. One thing we do have to offer is guidance and an organized program. Once they reach the next level, we can take them to the next level as a professional and then have some kind of job venture for them.

TSS: Do you also view the boxing part of it as a way to keep them off the streets?

Nate Tubbs: I really do, because I know what it did for me. I didn't start boxing until I was 18 years old. I was a basketball star through high school and I used to fight all the time. I got kicked out of school. I got kicked out of school in the 11th grade. I got married at 18, turned pro, and I had a lot of ups and downs. I've had a lot of long layoffs and injuries. Then, when I was with Mike Tyson it was kind of hard to go fight for \$500. In 1989, I

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started promoting. I promoted my next five or six fights. I've been a businessman from day one. I've been around Don King. Don King helped me a lot with a lot of different things. With this particular show we're doing delayed broadcasting. It's something he taught me. With this particular fight, we didn't get a lot of sponsorship because our timeframe wasn't there. On the next show, I think we'll do very well. I think I'll take myself out of the equation and just deal with the business part instead of fighting and doing the business part. I think we'll put together a nice promotional team because we know what to do. We've got the gym and the fighters, and that's the most important thing. That's how you develop a winning team.

TSS: Same question I'm going to ask Tony. How do you view the top heavyweights today compared to when you and Tony were coming up in the 1980s? For example, Dokes, Greg Page, Witherspoon, Pinklon Thomas? Who do you think the best heavyweight in the world is today, and how do they compare with that era?

Nate Tubbs: Right now, I kind of consider Mike Tyson retired. So we're looking at a lot of different guys. Klitschko is ok. One advantage they've got is that they're big and strong. They're like 6'8", well conditioned and disciplined. I think what's lacking in the heavyweights today is that the majority of the heavyweights have too many outside activities. We don't have the sacrifice-type heavyweights. We don't have heavyweights without problems.

For example, they did the show "The Contender" with Sylvester Stallone and Sugar Ray Leonard. What they don't have is reality. Show me something like "The Cinderella Man." I went to see the movie. He was struggling and couldn't find a job. That's reality. We go through that everyday. I can relate to that. I really enjoyed that movie.

But back to dealing with the heavyweights of today with the heavyweights of the 1980s like Tony and Greg Page, they were better quality fighters, very talented. That was one of the best crops of heavyweights in terms of talent. Now we just have big strong guys, punchers; guys who are just stronger than the next guy. Talent-wise, it's not there. Any heavyweight out there today on any given night can be beat; any heavyweight.

I believe right now with the proper training and without all of my distractions, I could beat half of the top five, but the desire has to be there. And there's too much political stuff. That is what deterred me from continuing fighting. It's possible for me to continue fighting, though. I put together the deal with Greg for the card: "The Return of the Tubbs Brothers." So, in order for my program to work---and we're in the process of developing a trade school---we can give so much back to this community, it wasn't even negotiable for me to suit back up. I didn't even think twice about that. That's what I had to do to make this happen. I was willing to give back to my community, so I was willing to do it. I've been training hard. I'm going to shine. Win, lose, or draw, I'm going to shine. I haven't trained this hard through my whole career since the Corrie Sanders fight. I think at this stage of my fighting career, I need something to motivate me. This is a fundraiser for my nonprofit organization. It motivates me every morning to get up and run and do the things I need to do. I haven't been this motivated for a long time because I feel like

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I'm doing something for a purpose. It's not like I need the money. I'm trying to give back. I basically raised Ravea and Dante. They need guidance. Right now, Greg and I are the only qualified promoters in the city that can guide the proper fighters. We understand what reality is. It's not so much about the money as it is the sacrifice and making all the right moves.

TSS: You were working up in the ring with Billy Joiner. Does he work in a lot of different gyms in the area?

Nate Tubbs: Well, basically he became the head of the amateur program. I asked him to come work with me for this fight, and he was glad to do it. He knows I have a lot of talent. They've got big hopes. I might sit down with them and go in a different direction, though. I might concentrate on the business part. I love doing it, but I can't do it twice per day and come up here with the kids. I don't have the energy for all of it. If I'm training, then I don't have anything to give to the kids. Then, I've denied my purpose. My whole purpose is the kids right now. I want to teach them the right moves and give them the proper guidance. Teach them how to invest their money. We've got so much to offer, and I'm so sincere about it. My whole focus is to give back to the kids, and let them know they have a promoter in this part of the country right now. We want to do some big things.

TSS: I've got a question about the amateur part of it because this is an amateur program you're developing. When you and Tony were growing up and coming through the amateur program here in Cincinnati, how was the amateur program different then compared to today?

Nate Tubbs: Well, back then we had quality trainers. Right now, we don't have good trainers. We've got people at gyms who are more concerned about the money than the sincerity of the boxing program. I'm looking for trainers now. And I have a 7500 square foot gym. We've got over 200 kids coming up here. I can't service all of them. I've got two or three trainers came up here to help me and they're very talented, but everyone has hidden agendas. No sincerity no more. The most important thing is that we're going to make adjustments. We're going to pick and choose our trainers. We'll put together an assembly line of trainers. We're going to organize and supervise the program and teach. We have a lot of trainers today riding off another fighter's coattails. We're going to teach here. When I came along we had Henry Ward who trained my brother, and Odell Hadley who turned me pro in California. They were teachers. They taught us how to think and deal with certain situations and to adjust. That's what isn't taught anymore.

TSS: How has the business part of boxing changed from the mid-1980s to the present?

Nate Tubbs: Business has changed a lot because the money isn't there like it used to be. It's hard for me to get motivated because of the purses they pay now. It's political. TV isn't giving out the money like they used to, but you can't blame them. Look at the quality of fighters. Nobody is willing to make that 100% dedication. We had Aaron Pryor here. He was one of the greatest junior welterweights in history. He used to spar with heavyweights. It's a blessing to see him come to the gym today. His son was up there training with a couple of guys. I provide a location where you have no choice but to

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come. It's the best thing going in the city right now. Emanuel Steward built a legacy up in Detroit with the Kronk Gym. With Greg Kasse, my brother and I, we have so much knowledge and talent to offer that we can give back to Cincinnati and build a legacy like Emanuel Steward did in Detroit.

TSS: When I was preparing for this interview, I crunched some numbers and realized that between you and Tony, you have somewhere between 50 and 60 years worth of boxing experience.

Nate Tubbs: Right. My brother taught me a lot. I wish I had the talent he had, and I wish he had the power I have. If he had my punching power, I think he would've ruled the 1980s. Talent-wise, he was one of the best boxers you'd ever want to see. So smart. I had this whole vision of this program before Greg Kasse came along. He's a piece of the pie. He's sitting right here. I want to get my brother on board, get some funding and pay trainers. If we're able to provide them with a paycheck and benefits, it will be a whole different program because they'll look at it as a career instead of volunteering. It's hard to get volunteers nowadays when people have so many financial problems. We're trying to get funding. We've got the bingo business going next door. All proceeds from our card go to the amateur boxing program here. We're going to finish up our facility and help generate money so we can pay our trainers and provide the kids with funding so we can travel. I've been to seven different countries. If it weren't for boxing, I don't think I would've ever left the city. Boxing did a lot for me. Right now, down here in the West End area, I'm on the community council. We're trying to do a sports organization that's not just boxing. We'll have other sports available so we can give the kids other opportunities, because everyone doesn't want to box, play basketball, baseball or football. We all come together and provide a facility where you can make your own choices. With the proper funding, we can support all of the organizations where no child is left behind. No matter what you choose to do, we're here to support it. Tomorrow night we're going to meet and greet with a lot of prominent people. Like I was telling Greg, we need to get them back in the community and in our sports program. Not just the boxing. We're working on it.

TSS: Anything else you'd like to add?

Nate Tubbs: Most important thing is come to the fight on August 6.

Ravea Springs Interview

TSS: You're a southpaw and have a record of 26-3 (20 KOs). You fought Wayne Braithwaite for the cruiserweight title in 2003. This will be your second comeback fight since that loss. How is training going along? What should we expect to see on August 6?

Ravea Springs: I'll weigh 181 or 182 for this fight. I'm moving to 175. That's my natural, walking around weight. I was fighting cruiserweight because I got a chance to fight William Guthrie. (Author's note: Ravea stopped Guthrie in 11 rounds for the WBO NABO

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Cruiserweight title on February 7, 2002.) Then I was going to move back down to 175, but they called me up to fight Kelvin Davis. At that time he was undefeated. I fought him for the money and publicity. I beat him, and they called me again for a world title fight against Wayne Braithwaite. (Ravea was stopped in four rounds by Braithwaite on February 21, 2003 for the WBC cruiserweight title.) For this fight coming up, I'll be more aggressive. Basically, just still boxing and showing my natural talent.

TSS: In terms of your time frame on moving back to 175, what should we expect?

Ravea Springs: In the next four or five months. I want to gradually move down to 178 and then 175. As long as I don't get any injuries on my hands or cuts or anything like that. I'll be ready.

TSS: Assess the 175-pound division. Who do you want to shoot for? Tarver is at the top again.

Ravea Springs: I want to go for the champions. I don't want to fight anybody but champions. I want to win a minor title first: NABO or NABF title. If those opportunities come, I'll take those, and then go for the WBO, WBC kind of titles. Right now, my management team just fell apart. I was with Ricardo Williams Sr. and Ricardo Williams Jr. Contract is over. Now I'm doing business with Nate Tubbs. Hopefully, we'll get a lot of things going. It depends on what my people say. I've got some people backing me, too. We'll all come together as a team and see what we can do.

TSS: What was your amateur record?

Ravea Springs: 123 fights. I lost 11 fights. I was a three time national champion, and a U.S. Olympic Festival champion. I won a bronze medal in the Pan Am Games. I came up in 1992 with Shane Mosley, Chris Byrd, and Oscar De La Hoya. We were all on the same national team together. I just want to get the opportunity that those guys got, and make some money. First, I want to become a world champion, and then make the money. That's my dream. It's always been my dream.

Dante Craig Interview

TSS: You were a 2000 Olympian. As a pro, you're 11-4 (8 KOs). You've won your last two fights. What was it like coming from the Olympics to the professional ranks? What part of the transition surprised you?

Dante Craig: Just slowing the pace down. When I first came into the pros, I had two fast knockouts. I came in there and exploded, and I got my opponents out of there. In my third fight, I had a guy in there who took most of my shots. He was able to make it to the third round, and I ended up getting winded and he won the fight. I learned that I have to slow my pace down and take my time. Learning to stay calm. Once you learn how to stay calm and comfortable in the ring.

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TSS: Do you plan to stay at middleweight? If so, how do you see the rest of your career playing out?

Dante Craig: I'm planning to stay at middleweight and get as strong as I can, and move up in the middleweight rankings. Right now, I just want to take one step at a time. I don't have real big goals and real big steps right now. I'm having problems with my management. I'm trying to get out of the contract right now, but I'm basically still in the contract until October. I want to fight into my early thirties. (Dante will 27 in August.) I've got three or four more years. I wish I could get a fight every month and stay active, but I just have to wait and see when I can get a fight. I just wanted to keep it going. I haven't fought for almost a year. I feel good. I looked good today in sparring, so hopefully I can keep going strong.

Tony Tubbs Phone Interview

TSS: You started boxing at a young age in Cincinnati. Your amateur record was 240-13. You sparred with Muhammad Ali. Give us your version of our sparring matches with Ali.

Tony Tubbs: I was 18. I was the first one to join the Muhammad Ali amateur team. Harold Smith was the promoter during that time. I worked with Muhammad. It was the thrill of a kid's life. Witherspoon, Holmes, Weaver, Percell Davis and Jimmy Ellis were there. The most that I can remember is that Ali had a great jab. I was a kid in a man's world. I got a beating and didn't want to come back. But Muhammad convinced me to stay. I did better when I came back.

TSS: This is basically a similar question I asked your brother. On the subject of amateur boxing, you were favored to medal in the 1980 Olympic Games, but that was a boycott year. Cincinnati is famous for its amateur program. How is the amateur scene different today in Cincinnati than when you were coming up?

Tony Tubbs: Half the team back then was from Cincinnati. Back then we had more time, and more gyms: the Emmanuel Center Gym, St. Marks, and more gyms. We always had an amateur fighter to go to the Olympics. We've had some kids like Dante Craig and Ricardo Williams lately, but today you have to leave Cincinnati to be a pro. They have to get behind the sport here in the city like football and baseball. They have to support it. We had to leave to become champions. Here it's hard to get someone to move you.

TSS: Here's another question along the same lines I posed to your brother. Regarding professional boxing and the current crop of heavyweights, how do the top heavyweights today compare to your era with Greg Page, Dokes, Witherspoon, yourself, Pinklon Thomas?

Tony Tubbs: I think the heavyweights today haven't worked their way to Top 10. If they were so good, I wouldn't be 3-0 right now. If I can make it to Top 10, that tells you how the division is going.

Written by Greg Smith
Tuesday, 26 July 2005 19:00

TSS: Who do you think the best heavyweight in the world is today?

Tony Tubbs: Klitschkos. They got a funny style, but a strong style. You gotta fight 'em. You can't box 'em. I've worked with the Klitschkos. I think they'll be there for a while. Right now it doesn't look too hot. That's why I'm taking my chances. With Wladimir, watch how his style changes with Emanuel Steward. He gotta stop worrying about knocking people out. I want to get in Top 10. I want to do just like George Foreman did. Nate has power, but he has to box his way into it.

TSS: Another question I asked your brother. How has the business of boxing changed today compared to when you were coming up the ranks in the 1980s?

Tony Tubbs: Used to be that you needed a promoter like King on a 50/50 deal. It used to be that you were with the same promoter. You would be locked up with the same promoter. Today, you can just sign a 3-4 fight deal. Now you can negotiate a deal, and you don't have to be locked in.

TSS: This will be your fourth fight in less than a year. You turned 47 in February. How would you grade your comeback thus far?

Tony Tubbs: I grade myself an A. Once I get sharper and in better condition, and get in with some name fighters, I can work my way into the Top 10. I still got my speed and I can still box. I can be very tricky with my combinations.

TSS: What is your time frame and goals for the remainder of your career?

Tony Tubbs: Right now, I'm trying to get some things together. Greg Kasse is trying to get me something every month so I can get sharper and sharper. If you stay active, you can be ready for ten round fights. There are some fighters out there I think I can beat.

TSS: Boxing isn't as tied to our culture as it used to be. It's not as popular a sport as it was 20 years ago for many reasons. In your opinion, what is the best way to reform the sport, and how do we getting back to the way it used to be?

Tony Tubbs: Today, the lighter weights have it all. If we can get that kind of boxing back in the heavyweights, then the sport will come back. We don't have anymore flashy heavyweights. I want to bring some of that back.