

Shea: Not Just Swank's Sparring Partner

Written by Robert Mladinich
Monday, 03 September 2007 19:00

Undefeated female super featherweight Maureen Shea of the Bronx, New York, is thrilled that she will be opening the black-tie show at Cipriani on Wall Street in Manhattan on Wednesday, September 5.

The card is being promoted by Tommy Gallagher Productions, in association with DiBella Entertainment. Headlining is behemoth heavyweight Michael Grant, 42-3 (32 KOS) of Blue Bell, Pennsylvania, against Kevin Monity, 17-3-1 (13 KOS), of Flat Rock, Michigan.

Also featured in eight round bouts are local favorites such as Bronx junior welterweight Jorge Teron, 17-0-1 (11 KOS), and James McGirt Jr., 16-0 (9 KOS), of Brentwood, Long Island. He is the son of the esteemed Buddy McGirt, a former champion who is now a top-flight trainer.

Although Gallagher has done several shows at the venue, the 26-year-old Shea, 11-0 (5 KOS), will be the first woman to lace them up on Wall Street.

"That is significant to me because there are a lot of parallels to boxing and Wall Street when it comes to women," said Shea, who is a few credits shy of earning a degree in English from Iona College.

"Women on Wall Street and women in boxing have both made stands in what had long been male-dominated fields. That can never be a bad thing."

As much as Shea, who is trained by Hector Roca and managed by Luigi Olcese, loves boxing, she is growing weary about proving herself to others.

Prior to her turning professional in August 2005, she had served as a sparring partner for actress Hilary Swank when Swank was training for her Academy Award winning title role in the film "Million Dollar Baby."

Shea has immense respect for Swank, as well as the acting medium, but is tired of still being identified as Swank's sparring partner. As her record and growing reputation will attest, she has worked hard and long enough to have her own identity.

"It was a great opportunity to work with Hilary, and it brought me a certain amount of notoriety which I welcomed," said Shea. "But I don't want to be constantly referred to as somebody else's sparring partner."

"I need to separate myself from that and be seen for doing my own thing, which was working myself to a number one ranking in the WBA and No. 4 or 5 in the WBC."

This past June, Shea who is of Irish and Mexican extraction, took part in a writers and fighters forum on Irish Boxing at the Downtown Association in Lower Manhattan.

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Others on the dais included undefeated middleweight James Moore, writer Robert Cassidy Jr., authors Jack Cavanaugh and Peter Wood, former cruiserweight Seamus McDonagh, who is now an actor, and onetime heavyweight title challenger Renaldo Snipes.

At one point a noted boxing historian aggressively lambasted Shea and Moore for not moving their heads enough in the ring. Shea, who prides herself on her head movement, let loose with a big Bronx cheer.

Staring at the fellow with a mixture of annoyance and surprise, she offered a verbal barrage that was similar to her fistic offensive. While she never got nasty, she let the fellow know in no uncertain terms that she did not agree with his assessment.

"He had no idea what he was talking about," said Shea. "I think he was speaking just to hear his own voice. He's entitled to his opinion, and I don't want to react to it (the negativity), but I had to set him straight.

"I don't need to speak it (defending herself), I'll show it in the ring," she continued. "Actions always speak louder than words."

Shea looks forward to winning a world title, but admits that she has no idea who the champion of her division is. She says that she leaves the managing and the matchmaking to others, and is just happy to fight whomever they put in front of her.

"I will just continue doing what I'm doing and when its time to step up and fight for a belt I will," she said. "It's my manager's job to tell me who I'm fighting. I leave my boxing future up to (in no particular order) God, Hector and Luigi."

Shea concedes that she was once "married to boxing" and it was her "passion, dream and love," but says that there are now other interests that she'd like to pursue when the time is right.

Besides hosting a Bronx public access television show called Shea's Corner, she is on hiatus from her job as a public relations specialist with Irish Ropes Boxing, which promotes undefeated middleweight sensation James Duddy.

Eddie McLoughlin, the president of Irish Ropes, has assured her that the job is waiting for her whenever she's ready to return.

She is also romantically involved with someone who will see her fight live for the first time on September 5. When asked if he is a fighter, she says no before the question is even finished.

"Boxing relationships are tough," she explained. "There can be too much competitiveness when one fights more often than the other, making weight together can be challenging, plus the mood fluctuations and conflicts of interest."

He is an actor and she asserts that boxer and actor relationships are much more workable,

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especially in her case.

"Boxing and acting very different, but also extremely similar," she said. "What we both do is physical and psychological. Fighters are a rare breed. In many case, actors are also. What I do know, is that he gets me."

Shea has always been an incredibly upbeat person, but lately she is even more upbeat than usual. Something tells me it has more to do with romance than boxing, but her and her beau will have a big test when he watches her do battle on Wednesday night. Asked if he is concerned for her safety, she lets out a big laugh.

"He knows I train hard," she said. "If he is concerned, he doesn't tell me. That's a question you'll have to ask him."

Shea wants to eventually settle down and start a family, but says that she will always be involved in boxing, either as a promoter, manager, broadcaster or publicist.

There is no question that boxing has been good to her. It enabled her to release some youthful angst from her psyche, and hopefully will set the stage for a glorious post-fight career.

"I have lots of dreams," said Shea. "I hope that boxing propels me to a position where I can make those dreams come true."

Cipriani is located at 55 Wall Street in Manhattan. The cocktail hour starts at 6:00 p.m. with dinner being served at 7:00 p.m. Tables for 10, ringside tables and individual seats are still available. For more information contact Luigi Olcese at 914-469-0430.

Check out Shea's web site at: www.sheaboxing.com

Check out her public access show at: www.bronxnet.org. Click the link for Shea's Corner.