

Nuptials In Center Ring At Gleason's

Written by Robert Mladinich
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The fabled Gleason's Gym in Brooklyn, New York, will be transformed into a wedding chapel on Sunday, October 14, when Keisher "Fire" McLeod, a three-time New York City Golden Gloves and world amateur champion, will tie the knot with Darryl "Flaco" Wells, a onetime amateur boxer.

Fire, a veteran of about 28 amateur fights, of which she's lost four, jokes that her "real" record is 1-13 (13 breakups).

The 35-year-old Flaco's romantic record is 1-9 (9 breakups).

The ceremony, which was the brainchild of Bruce Silverglade, the longtime owner of Gleason's, will be officiated by Supreme Court Justice Betty Williams, who trains at the gym. Approximately 150 guests will be in attendance.

Among the boxing luminaries expected to attend are IBF junior welterweight champion Paulie Malignaggi, former titlist Zab Judah, heavyweight title challenger Jameel "Big Time" McCline, Melissa "Hurricane" Hernandez and Belinda Laracquette.

A few months back Silverglade saw Fire, who in addition to training at the gym works there part-time, looking through her calendar book. She was trying to figure out a date that she and Flaco could get married at City Hall.

Silverglade knew what a love affair Fire had with boxing, so he suggested she and Flaco make it official at the gym.

"I've had a lot of parties and bar mitzvahs here, so why not a wedding?" said Silverglade. "Fire is here day in and day out anyway, either working or training. She's my right hand man."

"This is really like my first home," said the 30-year-old Fire, who is also a working actress. "I come here to work and train. When I get famous as either an actress or a boxer, I still want to work here. I love this place."

Fire, who appeared in the film "Love the Hard Way," began boxing in Manhattan in the early 2000s. Utilizing the sport more for conditioning than anything else, she initially had no competitive aspirations.

But she realized right away how much she loved the pace and intensity of the workout. After a few months, trainer Lee Shabaka, who called all of his female pupils "Champ," told her that he could make her a champion. Until that time, Fire had been training completely on her own.

"He was a big burly guy who called all the girls Champ," said Fire. "I knew that he had made quite a few female champions. I started training with him and things just took off from there."

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In only her third fight, Fire beat a woman who was a veteran of 40 bouts. Within a year she won the Empire State title. When Shabaka, and the girls at the gym started calling her "Champ" it was music to her ears.

Fire met Flaco when he tried to sell her a pair of Chanel shoes. He spotted some of her trophies on a shelf. Initially assuming that her roommate was a boxer, he told her that he had been an amateur fighter in his native Virginia.

Before long a smitten Flaco started visiting her at the gym, and eventually his company became one of her sponsors. Being in the gym all the time, Flaco fell back in love with the sport, as well as the woman who will soon be his wife.

Last Christmas, Flaco got on his knees at Fire's apartment in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, and asked her to marry him. She was unequivocal in her affirmative response. He was equally thrilled with the prospect of being wed at Gleason's.

"I never could have imagined getting married in a boxing gym, but now I'm embracing the idea," he said. "This place means so much to her, so it also means so much to me. This is the place where she's working to make her dreams come true, so it's a fitting place to get married."

Fire plans on winning one more local and national title, and then turning professional in 2008. Does she think that being married will make her complacent and take away her boxing hunger?

"Not a chance!" proclaimed Fire, as she flashed her megawatt smile. "I still have a lot of dreams. One of them will take place on October 14. I'll get to share all of my dreams with my husband, and he'll share his with me. We are a good team."

Dinner will take place at 5:00 p.m. sharp. The ceremony will commence at 7:00 p.m. and the reception will be held from 5:00 p.m to midnight. The couple is registered under both of their names at Bed, Bath & Beyond.