

ShoBox Preview: Wolak/Smith

Written by Robert Mladinich
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When the Aviator Sports and Recreation Center in Brooklyn, New York, was under construction several years ago, promoter Sal Musemeci envisioned it as a perfect boxing venue. Located at Floyd Bennett Field on the southern end of Flatbush Avenue, it was easily accessible and had a huge parking lot that could accommodate up to 5,000 cars.

Musemeci knew that when the time was right he would start promoting there, but he never could have imagined the success he has experienced in such a short time. On Friday, August 1, his company, Sal Musemeci's Final Forum, in association with Cedric Kushner's Gotham Boxing, will promote its fourth show at the already storied venue.

His earlier shows have been televised on the VERSUS network and ESPN 2. The August 1 show, which is being called "Fists-A-Flying IV," will be broadcast on ShoBox: The New Generation.

The headline bout features the extremely popular junior middleweight Pawel "Raging Bull" Wolak, 21-0 (14 KOS), a native of Poland who fights out of New York, against Ishe Smith, 19-3 (9 KOS), of Las Vegas. Smith was a participant on season one of "The Contender" reality television series.

In the co-feature, red-hot lightweight sensation Jorge "The Truth" Teron, 21-0-1 (14 KOS), of the Bronx, takes on the alligator tough Michael Lozada, 29-4-1 (22 KOS), of Mexico.

It figures to be a night of explosive action. Wolak, an offensive dynamo who fights every minute of every round and never seems to get tired, is engaging in what is undoubtedly his biggest challenge to date. Smith is a slick and savvy counterpuncher who is known for frustrating fighters like Wolak.

"Pawel is one of the most exciting fighters in the world at any weight," said Musemeci. "His style is to be straightforward and always aggressive, with no retreat. He is like an old-time fighter. That is a big compliment."

What makes the match with Smith so appealing, says Musemeci, is the distinct clash of styles. "Anytime you match a good puncher with a good boxer, it makes for an exciting fight," he said.

ShoBox commentator Steve Farhood says the Wolak-Smith matchup is what the show's concept is all about.

"No doubt that Pawel is being matched tougher than he has been before," said Farhood. "For that reason, it is the perfect ShoBox main event. There are such clearly defined contrasts between Wolak, the pressure fighter who is an upcoming but somewhat untested prospect, and Smith, the defensive master."

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Farhood described Wolak as “a wind-up toy who never stops throwing punches,” a style that could either help him or hinder him depending on which version of Smith shows up.

“It could either work perfectly or backfire in his face,” he explained. “If Smith fights defensively, Wolak should outpoint him easily. But if Smith is willing to fight back as often as he will have to to win, he could outclass Wolak and show that he is still the contender he once was.”

Musemeci is also thrilled to be promoting Teron, who he describes as one of the most exciting prospects in the world. If Teron beats Lozada, which will be no easy feat, Musemeci believes the world will realize what he’s been saying for quite some time now: that Teron has championship potential written all over him.

“Jorge is a better fighter than a lot of people realize,” said Musemeci. “Against a guy like Lozada, he should be able to shine if he’s at his best. He’s been developed somewhat slowly, but this will be his coming out party.”

Farhood somewhat agrees with Musemeci’s assessment. “Jorge is a work in progress,” he explained. “He has an instinct to fight, but God gave him a body that should box. Lozada’s (aggressive) style should play into Jorge’s strengths.”

Sadly, says Musemeci, the fans watching on television won’t be able to see the compelling undercard that will be highlighted by a slew of blue-chip, local prospects.

They include a trio of popular welterweights, all of whom will be showcased in separate bouts. They are Mike Ruiz, 7-2 (5 KOS) and Chris Algieri, 2-0 (1 KO), both of whom are from Long Island, and Brooklyn’s Martin Wright, 7-0-1 (3 KOS).

Making his pro debut will be super middleweight Hajro Sujak, a resident of the Bronx whose families hail from Montenegro in the former Yugoslavia. He was a sensational amateur who tangled with, among others, the currently fast-rising pro Daniel Jacobs.

Musemeci’s enthusiasm as a boxing promoter is downright infectious. He already has an August 6 show scheduled for the Aviator that will be televised on ESPN 2. He is no stranger to doing more than a few things at a time.

A former New York City firefighter, Musemeci is as tireless of a promoter as Wolak is as a fighter. One of his most rewarding accomplishments was his discovery of the Aviator, which he asserts has become the number one training ground for New York area fighters.

“Back in the day, when boxing really was thriving, you had places like Sunnyside Gardens, St. Nick’s Arena, Ridgewood Grove and the Coney Island Velodrome where fighters were developed,” he explained. “It was in places like that that boxing careers were built. The Aviator serves the same purpose as those places did. It is second only to Madison Square Garden as the top boxing venue in New York.”

Besides being a great indoor facility, the Aviator offers parking at no cost and its wide open

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spaces make it very appealing for television trucks. Because it is located on an old airfield, there are no problems associated with neighborhood disruptions.

Musemeci started off there with a bang, and things are just getting better and better. When he promotes the August 6 show, it will be his fifth show at the venue in four months.

“I plan on doing shows here for a long time to come,” said Musemeci. “But you can only take one show at a time. The August 1 show is going to be sensational. ShoBox viewers are going to see future champions in action. It doesn’t get more exciting than that.”

Tickets range from \$50 to \$200 and can be obtained by calling Gotham Boxing at 212-755-1944 or Final Forum at 516-343-0053. The doors open at 7:00 PM.

The Aviator is located at Floyd Bennett Field, which can be reached via Exit 11S, Flatbush Avenue, on the Belt Parkway.