

Pro Boxing Comes To Holyoke, MA. For Second Time In 50 Years!

Written by The Sweet Science
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Professional Boxing Returns to Holyoke for only second time in 50 years

Whitley-Hall Headlines “Homecoming” June 25

HOLYOKE, Mass. (May 12, 2011) – Professional boxing returns to Holyoke for only the second time in the past half-century, the first since 2000, on June 25 when American Fighting Organization (“AFO”) presents, “Homecoming,” at the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Holyoke.

Boxing’s roots in Holyoke date all of the way back to 1896 and Valley Arena, a converted Gas House, was a regular venue for “smokers” boxing shows Monday nights from 1926-1960. The great Rocky Marciano made his pro debut there March 17, 1947, knocking out Lee Epperson in the third round. Hall of Famer Willie Pep fought there a dozen times in the forties, as did his fellow HOF inductees Sandy Saddler, Beau Jack, Sixto Escobar and Fritzie Zivic. World champions Tony DeMarco, Paddy DeMarco, Lou Ambers and Lou Salica, 1932 Olympic bronze medalist, also fought as pros in Valley Arena. A pair of world heavyweight champions, Joe Louis and Jersey Joe Walcott, respectively, refereed a wrestling match and fought a boxing exhibition there. Pro cards were also held in Holyoke at City Hall, Falco Field, and the Paper City Athletic Club.

“Homecoming” features three Holyoke fighters and two others from nearby Springfield. “We’re very excited to bring pro boxing back to Holyoke,” AFO director of boxing operations Artie DePinho said. “Holyoke has a long, rich boxing tradition dating back more than 100 years. Our show will showcase some solid veterans and great young talent in exciting, competitive fights.”

In the eight-round main event, former Massachusetts super middleweight champion Derrick “Double Impact” Whitley (24-25-3, 11 KOs), of Holyoke, takes on former Interim World Boxing Association (“WBA”) light heavyweight titlist Richard “The Destroyer” Hall (29-8, 27 KOs) at a 190-pound catch-weight in a battle of contrasting styles between veteran southpaws. Whitley’s never-quit style has resulted in him never being stopped in 52 pro bouts, while Hall has knocked out 27 of his 29 victims.

Whitley’s 16-year pro career includes fights against world champion Manny Siaca, as well as world title challengers Kabary Salem (twice), Randy Griffin and Rico Hoye. Hall, who defeated Anthony Bigeni by second-round knockout in their 1999 Interim WBA light heavyweight world title fight, defeated former world champion Byron Mitchell 3 ½ years ago, in addition to testing world champions Roy Jones Jr., Dariusz Michalczewski (twice) and Glen Johnson.

Super featherweight and fan favorite Joseph “Chip” Perez (5-1, 2 KOs) returns home to fight in the six-round, co-feature against an opponent to be determined. Pro debuting junior welterweights Jair “Da-Bully” Ramos, of Waterbury (CT), and Robbie Hunt, of Hyannis (MA), square-off in a four-round bout.

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Also fighting on the undercard in four-round bouts is Holyoke light heavyweight Pedro "Tyson" Gonzales in his pro debut vs. TBA, Springfield light heavyweight Reinaldo Graceski (1-0) vs. Kevin "KTAY Z UNKL" Cobbs (1-0, 1 KO), and Springfield welterweight Jose Angel "KO" Ortiz (4-6-1, 1 KO) vs. Greg Hackett (2-8), All fights and fighters are subject to change.

Tickets are priced at \$40.00, \$50.00 and \$100.00 and are available at or by calling (413.534.7366) the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Holyoke (70 Nick Cosmos Way), as well as going on line at www.afomma.com. Doors open at 6 PM/ET, first bout at 7 PM/ET.