

Written by Michael Woods  
Wednesday, 27 July 2011 09:27

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*Dibella, Bracero and Gallagher after a win. "Tito" isn't a KO artist but he has an enough pop to keep 'em honest.*

The heart and sweet soul of boxing isn't in the megafights, isn't found in and around the pay per view extravaganzas in which too frequently these days you find overpaid people underperforming. You'll find much depth, of character, of decency, of the sort of resilience which makes the sport the standard bearer among sports as metaphor for life, in and around the club shows.

I found some of all of that, and a damned fine Grandma slice, at a press conference to hype Saturday's Broadway Boxing show, which features headliner Gabriel "Tito" Bracero doing battle at the Aviator complex in Brooklyn. The press conference took place at Portobello's, a Tribeca pizzeria owned by a genial and generous proprietor, Anthony Catanzaro. Sharp eyed readers know him as the manager to Paulie Malignaggi, and I know him as the guy who kept asking me, "Whaddya want?" and kept bringing me hot slices, and then topped me off with a majestic eggplant parm sub. (I say sub because I grew up in Massachusetts, and there, a "hero" is whatever Red Sox player hit the game-winning walkoff homer the night before at Fenway, not a sandwich.) The press conference lasted only an hour plus, but three hours later, I was still there, talking boxing with Catanzaro, and some other media types who share this addiction of ours.

Bracero, by the way, wasn't present, because his kid has diabetes, and had an episode earlier, so the boxer stayed with him to make sure he was OK. That's the heart and soul stuff I was talking about before...The 16-0 junior welterweight prospect turned contender from Brooklyn will fight South African southpaw Danie van Staden (8-6) as he tries to make a slow and steady climb into the ratings totem pole.

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The promoter of the event, Lou DiBella, is one of those rare types who actually gets involved in these "club show" events, and gets to know the participants. He doesn't just fund them, and hand them off, and hope that in three years, some of the fighters will be world class pugilists. DiBella announced that Keisher McLeod-Wells will fight at Aviator, and that moving forward, Broadway Boxing will feature a female fight on every card. "I'm happy to go back to Brooklyn, because I'm from Brooklyn," Dibella said as he introduced Bracero's manager, certified character Tommy Gallagher. (Gallagher, by the way, pushes hard to honor veteran boxers as part of NY's Ring 8 organization, which is devoted to paying homage to fighters from bygone eras, and also giving them some financial help if need be. This show will spotlight Ring 8, and the proud pugilists who toiled in decades long past.)

Gallagher spoke to the knock on Bracero, that he doesn't have much power. "I can name ten great fighters that couldn't break an egg that became world champion," he said.

Quick aside to motorcycle enthusiasts who feel lucky: raffle tickets, at \$100 a pop, will be available at the show, with the winner to receive a Harley "Fat Boy." Proceeds go to help fund the Gleason's Gym "Give Kids A Dream," (<http://www.gleasonsgym.net/gleasonsgymdream.html>) which is set up to give youth at risk a structured outlet ie boxing in order to help get them on a righteous path. And the best part is: only 350 tix will be sold, so odds of winning are swell.

After I ate twelve slices, I cornered Dibella and asked him to give me a rundown on his roster, who'll be fighting when.

Andre Berto-Will fight IBF champ Jan Zaveck (31-1) on Sept. 3, site TBD, likely either in Biloxi or in Vegas. Zaveck will be in tougher than he was in his last bout. Somehow, he prevailed upon the IBF to allow him to defend the crown against Paul Delgado, who is to be kind not of title-shot caliber.

Kermit Cintron-The fighter coming off a loss to Carlos Molina, who is co-promoted by Dibella and Top Rank, wanted to get back on the horse, so he'll meet Antwone Smith, definitely no bum, on Aug. 12. "He begged for the fight," Dibella said when I expressed surprise that Cintron didn't come back against a softer touch, to see where he's at.

Argenis Mendez-The 18-1 Dominican born super feather gets a title shot on Aug. 20, against Juan Carlos Salgado (23-1) for the vacant IBF strap.

Zsolt Erdei-The 33-0 ex light heavy and cruiser champ wants Jean Pascal, or maybe young Brit WBO light heavy champ Nathan Cleverly early next year.

Peter Manfredo-Looks like he'll get a crack at WBC middleweight champ Julio Cesar Chavez Jr in September. "It's 99% done," Dibella said. This will be an action tussle, though 'Fredo will be a healthy underdog.

Breidis Prescott-Meets Paul McCloskey in Belfast in a WBA junior welter title eliminator on Sept. 10. Guess who, Amir Khan, holds that title. In September 2008, Prescott took out Khan in round

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one of their scrap, which was supposed to be a record builder for the Brit.

Edwin Rodriguez-The Mass. fighter will headline in Worcester on Aug. 20. I see him getting into title shot territory if he can stay healthy by mid 2012.

Randall Bailey-The hard punching vet fights Sept. 3, for TBD. He got some easy money in the form of a step aside payment so Berto could meet Zaveck.

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### **brownsugar says:**

any talk of pizza gets my attention immediately... well I guess everybody can't be a P4P fighter, hopefull Manfredo will keep Chavez Jr honest.

### **esteticuonsdpv says:**

very nice - thanks

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