

NFLer Tommy Z Will Fight On Cotto PPV

Written by The Sweet Science
Friday, 04 March 2011 20:50



TOMMY ZBIKOWSKI RETURNS TO THE RING!

Baltimore Ravens Safety to Fight on Cotto-Mayorga World Championship in the Opening Bout of Pay-Per-View Broadcast

LAS VEGAS, NEV. (March 4, 2011) – Baltimore Ravens safety **TOMMY ZBIKOWSKI** will make his Las Vegas debut – as a professional boxer – opening the pay-per-view televised broadcast of the

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“Relentless: Miguel Cotto vs. Ricardo Mayorga”

world super welterweight championship fight,

Saturday, March 12

at the

MGM Grand

in Las Vegas. “Relentless” will be produced and distributed live by

Showtime PPV

®

.
Zbikowski, who completed his third season with the Ravens, will take on

Richard Bryant

(1-2, 1 KO), from London, KY, in a four-round heavyweight bout.

“Top Rank welcomes Tommy Z back to the square ring,” said **Bob Arum**. “We know that Tommy has all the ability to excel in boxing like he has on the gridiron.”

“I’ve played in an AFC championship game and Notre Dame Stadium. I’ve fought at Madison Square Garden and MGM Grand. I would like someone to beat that,” said Tommy Z to the *Baltimore Sun*

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Tommy Z (1-0, 1 KO), a former star defensive back and team captain for the University of Notre Dame, is also a former Chicago Golden Gloves finalist. He was forced to withdraw from the championship final due to a family emergency. His amateur record was 75-15. He made his professional debut on June 10, 2006, on the undercard of the Top Rank-promoted Miguel Cotto-Paulie Malignaggi world junior welterweight championship at Madison Square Garden, knocking out Robert Bell (2-2), in just :49 seconds. He is now training with **Orlando Cuellar**, who also trains former light heavyweight champion Glen Johnson.

Tommy Z will be led into the ring by **Troy Smith**, who won the 2006 Heisman Trophy while playing at Ohio State. Many of Tommy Z’s Ravens and Notre Dame teammates will be attending the fight, including **Ed Reed**, the Raven’s Pro Bowl safety, and Philadelphia Eagles defensive tackle and former Notre Dame teammate

Ty Law

, who escorted Tommy Z into the ring for his pro debut at Madison Square Garden in 2006. Tommy will be in Law’s wedding this Saturday.

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Asked if he was going to stick with Tommy Z as his boxing name, he responded: "I think so. I've always just gone by Tommy. When I start boxing full-time I'll get a real nickname. I'm waiting for a boxing writer to just give me a nickname for boxing because I've never had one and I've always looked forward to having one. I can't be a self-proclaimed whatever. So I'm just waiting for a nice nickname to stick."

Here's more of what Tommy Z and Arum had to say on Friday:

TOMMY Z:

"Regardless of what happens with the (Collective Bargaining Agreement) and all those talks, I will fight on March 12. I've been waiting five years and counting down the minutes for March 12."

What do you remember about your first pro fight?

"It was a lot of nerves. It was the first time taking off the head gear. It was the real deal. It was the professional ranks and Madison Square Garden. It was my top moment in my athletic career and a moment that I feel like was yesterday to me. I remember everything about that night. I remember the locker room, the fight night, afterwards. It was a lot of fun. It was a hundred rounds of sparring for 50 seconds of fighting, so I've been itching and itching to get back to fighting."

What will be your strategy on March 12?

"I'm going to do kind of what I've always done. I'm going to fight my fight. I'm going to give a lot

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of cruiserweights and heavyweights trouble because I've always fought like a welterweight. I think I'm going to give a lot of fans pleasure watching me because of my high pace."

Is there any risk of injury getting into the ring?

"Other than getting knocked out there is not really that many problems that are going to happen. There's not really going to be any torn ACLs or bad ankles. Things like that. I've never actually been injured in a fight or sparring. All of my injuries have come more from football more than anything. And if you can make it through four years of college football and three years in the NFL without getting too many injuries, then you should be all right because that's the most dangerous sport in the world."

How does your training style differ and how is your training going with Orlando Cuellar, Glen Johnson's trainer down in Miami?

"Just from talking to him he's got a very modern philosophy on how he trains fighters. You know, a lot of people in boxing are still stuck in that old-school training of jogging for four or five miles. This guy, in talking to him and hearing everything he does with his fighters and training them as individuals, he modifies it and gives you those special little details of the professional fight game that is going to take a fighter to another level. Working with him has been great and I look forward to working with him."

What has been the Ravens reaction to you getting back into boxing?

"Well actually they gave me a tender as a restricted free agent, so technically and legally there is nothing that can stop me from fighting on March 12. I've let Chuck Pagano, my defensive coordinator, know. With all the talks going on now there is really no one that can say no to me. I've just continued on in the training and hope that they would respect my decision, which I think they have and they will because they know of my past fight at Madison Square Garden and that I was a professional boxer before I was a professional football player."

Beyond this fight, what are your future plans in boxing?

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“Right now, I’m just looking forward to being a professional boxer again. I’m just looking forward to getting this fight on March 12 under my belt. Then I will get in the gym and figure out when the next time that I’ll be able to fight.”

Is it possible you could fight three or four times into the summer?

“I think that’s definitely possible. Because now the way I’m feeling as compared to the way I was at Madison Square Garden is so different. I was still in college and an impressionable kid on what I thought needed to be done in being a football player and an athlete which was lifting weights, which really did not help out my boxing. Since then, I’ve been more functional in my training with not a lot of weight training. Right now I’m at about five and a half rounds of fighting at my pace without getting tired. So I’d like to keep working in the gym and keep up my pace and be able to fight six or seven rounds. I mean, if you’re able to keep that pace, then four rounds shouldn’t be that much for you and right now four and five rounds is feeling really good.”

So this is not a one-shot deal like when you were at Notre Dame?

“Nah, I don’t think so. I’m walking around at about 195, 196 pounds. On a good day when I’m eating a ton, I’m up to 198. So I feel like cruiserweight would be a good weight for me so I’m not giving up too much in weight.”

What are your best assets as a fighter?

“I’ve just always tried to be an all-around fighter because you never know what kind of situation you’re going to be in or what type of fighter or style you’ll be up against. Growing up I was never just stuck in one gym just because I was so active in football, wrestling, track, baseball, boxing. I was in every other gym, any gym, with every coach, any style. A 12 by 12 ring, in a phone booth, a pro ring. Any type of style from slick to pro style, so any style you can possibly come up with I’ve learned something from and tried to make a little bit of it my own. My style changes not only every fight but every round.”

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What will it mean to have your football buddies there?

“I talked to them the other day. It’s just great to have the support of other athletes and guys that were on your team who have that respect for you and not only talk about, ‘Hey, next time you fight we’re going to be there.’ But now it’s actually happening. Guys like (Ravens teammates) Ed Reed, (John) Dewan, Chris Carr, (Dominique) Foxworth. They’re all going to be there. I know Paul Kruger and Haloti (Ngata) will be driving over, too. I’ll have to have (330-pound defensive lineman) Haloti do the hawk before he walks in. If (Bryant) sees Haloti in my corner there’s no way this guy’s fighting me. We should have a good representation from the NFL.”

Do you think you would ever consider leaving football behind and concentrating strictly on boxing?

“At some point I will. I know that if I keep playing football there will be a long section of my life missed without boxing. But I’m still young. I know a lot of boxers’ primes are 29, 30, 31 years old, so I know I have time. But God I’ve missed it. I’ve enjoyed every minute of getting back into it. Just getting back in the gym and the hard work and getting my timing back; just that feeling of fighting again. If you haven’t done it, it’s hard to describe.”

There’s been a feeling for a long time that the best heavyweights are in the NFL right now. Do you believe that?

“It might be true. The Klitschkos are the best right now and they’ve been the best for a long time. Just because they’re in Europe doesn’t mean there are not great heavyweights. I think a lot of the American heavyweights right now are playing football. Boxing is honestly one of the most athletic things you can do and to be a good boxer you have to be very athletic. Right now you’re seeing the top athletes go to college to get an education. I think if you have boxing back at the collegiate level you might have some more American heavyweights but right now they’re seeing that as the best path to go.”

What football players would make good boxers?

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“If you let me train Haloti Ngata he’d do some damage. He’s seriously the most gifted athlete I’ve ever been around and he’s 330 pounds. There’s no one who would be able to compete with him physically. He’s just a bear.”

How are the NFL talks progressing?

“It’s good they’re still talking but I’m not sure what’s been said or what’s been done or why the (lockout date) has been extended. At least they’re talking and it should move things along faster. If it’s done by the end of next week, I’m not sure about that but at least it’s moving.”

BOB ARUM:

“As long as he is available to fight we plan to keep him very busy whether it’s once a month or every two to three weeks. He’s been off for awhile but our matchmakers feel like he can compete at the top level of boxing at cruiserweight, so we’re going to keep him as busy as his schedule permits. Obviously, once they have to go back to training camp, we will be back on hiatus again. But as long as he’s available, he will be kept very, very busy.

“We’ve gotten calls today from other NFL football players. Osi Umenyiora called and he said he’s bringing some of the football Giants over to the fights on March 12.”

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