Gettin' back to basics

Cruiserweight Godfrey starting from scratch as he aims for another shot at a title

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (July 10, 2012) – **Matt Godfrey**'s body might not heal as quickly as it used to after 23 professional fights, and certain injuries might linger longer than normal, but there's no reason why the Providence, R.I., cruiserweight can't contend for another shot at a world title.

"I'm 31 years young," said Godfrey, who'll fight in front of his hometown fans for the first time in five years on **Thursday, July 19th, 2012** at Twin River Casino. "I still feel like a kid in this game even though I've been around for a while."

Godfrey's journey back to the top of the cruiserweight division begins next Thursday when he faces sturdy veteran **Jesse Oltmans** (10-3, 7 KOs) of Bartonsville, Pa., in the six-round co-feature of Jimmy Burchfield's Classic Entertainment & Sports' "Built To Last" show at the Twin River Event Center in Lincoln, R.I.

Not only has Godfrey (20-3, 10 KOs) not fought in Rhode Island since 2007, he hasn't fought at all in 13 months since losing to **Lateef Kayode** in California for the North American Boxing Association (NABA) and North American Boxing Federation (NABF) cruiserweight titles – the second of back-to-back losses for Godfrey, who also suffered a brutal, knockout loss to World Boxing Organization (WBO) champion **Marco Huck** 10 months prior to the fight against Kayode.

As Godfrey climbed higher and higher in the cruiserweight rankings, the layoff between fights became much longer as he and his camp plotted each step carefully in hopes of bringing the cruiserweight world title to Providence. Now it's back to the drawing board, which means Godfrey simply wants to stay active before he makes his next run at championship glory.

“I got myself to the highest point where I fought for a world title, but I came up short,” Godfrey said. “Now I’m at a point where it’s do-or-die. I have to rebuild again and almost start from scratch. Over the past five years, I’ve been fighting nothing but iron once or twice a year, training for the best fighters in the world.

“To be honest, it’s a little humbling to be at a point where I have to start over again.”

Being back home might help ease the sting; it’s been five years since Godfrey last fought in Providence, defending his NABF cruiserweight title in a 10-round unanimous-decision win over **Derrick Brown**
. At the time, he was undefeated at 16-0 and ranked No. 2 among cruiserweights by the World Boxing Council (WBC).

Over the next five years, Godfrey fought everywhere from North Dakota to Germany, successfully defending the title two more times before losing to Huck in 2010. The goal now is to get back to where he was that night in August of 2007, and the good news is he has time to make the right choices along the way considering his age and his health are still on his side.

“I can’t wait to feel the energy from the hometown fans,” he said. “I’m so used to being here as a spectator. I always hoped it would be me in that ring, and now it finally will be.

“I’m real happy. I can still run with the young guys and bang a few of them out in sparring. I work harder than all of them, so I don’t think it’s the last run for me. Boxing is in my blood. I’ve been doing this my whole life.

“I’ve been in situations recently where I’ve turned down fights because they weren’t right for me. Coming off back-to-back losses, I could’ve taken fights where one win would’ve put me right back in the hunt, but I’m a realist. I need to get back to basics.”

Perhaps the most pressing need is for Godfrey is to stick to the game plan once the bell rings. The Providence native admits he’s guilty of overthinking at times, particularly in his fights in Germany against **Rudolf Kraj** (2008) and Huck.

“All you have to do is be who you are and get in there and punch,” he said. “In some of these fights, I think too much. I wasn’t doing what I did to get to that point. I’d get to the big fight and be thinking things like, ‘Did that punch land? Did the judge see it?’ Guys would be throwing bombs and missing them, but the crowd is going wild, so I’m wondering if the judges thought it landed, so now I’m thinking, ‘Oh, man, I have to get that one back!’

“I was just overthinking.”

Fighting at Twin River, Godfrey should be more relaxed on July 19th, which will allow him to focus squarely on his step-by-step journey back to the top of the cruiserweight division. No timetable has been set – he’s playing it by ear, which helps alleviate some of the pressure.

“I don’t want to just win – I want to be dominant and look great,” Godfrey said. “In my eyes, I haven’t looked very, very good in a fight in almost two years.

“The lack of fights hasn’t helped, either. I haven’t had enough fights to work on some of the things I need to work on. It’s difficult to get better when you have such a long layoff. I’ve been knocked down so many notches that I don’t look at other fighters and say, ‘This is the guy I’m going to fight next.’ I know I’m a few fights away from even sniffing the Top 5 or Top 10 right now, so I’m just taking it one step at a time, one fight at a time.”

The road back to the top begins next Thursday in a familiar setting at Twin River, one Godfrey hopes will provide a much-needed boost against a dangerous puncher.

“You can always feed off that hometown crowd,” he said. “I’m looking forward to it.”

Tickets for “Built To Last” are $40.00, $75.00 and $125.00 (VIP) and can be purchased by calling CES at 401.724.2253/2254, online at www.cesboxing.com or www.twinriver.com , at the Players Club booth at Twin River, or through any TicketMaster location. Doors open 6 p.m. with the first bout scheduled for 7.