



White Collar Boxing Event Delivers Knockout for Bob Lynch Boxing Foundation

By *Nicholas Garton* - Nov 7, 2018

It's the sound that is exhilarating.

The sound of hard punches hitting sparring gloves punctuates the air. It's thick air, too. With every impact the electricity in the ever-growing crowd grows more tangible.

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At first, the ringside area in the rural Red Mouse sports bar outside of Cross Plains, is relatively quiet on this Friday night. Small groups of people mill about. Organizers and even the fighters themselves casually move around the room. You could practically walk right into the boxing ring if you wanted.

But as the evening wears on, hundreds of people fill the room. About 400 in total, each paying \$20 for the privilege of watching people who spend their days in offices take jabs and hooks at each other. There is no way to move from your spot, no space between the rowdy and drinking and excited crowd of people. The yelling and laughter grows ever louder in order to be heard over the violent, pulsating sound of fighters warming up, throwing ever more vicious punches at the gloves of their trainers.

A capacity crowd filled the Red Mouse Saturday. Photo via Facebook.

Such is the scene at The Red Mouse on this early November Saturday night. The event is called White Collar Boxing, but the crowd and the fighters themselves seem anything but white collar.

For the past three years, the Bob Lynch Boxing Foundation has run an annual fundraiser in Pine Bluff, a small town outside of Cross Plains where men and women alike come box just for fun, to give it a try, or to really get competitive. The event, which is an officially sanctioned USA Boxing event, raised funds for the Foundation to send some of its elite amateur fighters to tournaments and showcase events around the country. The fighters on this Friday night are not elite boxers, but rather volunteers who bought their own gear and have been training for four months, all just to support the foundation and its mission to support young athletes.

About 400 people showed up at the fundraiser this past Saturday to witness nine fights and celebrate the news that the Bob Lynch Boxing Foundation had garnered the rights to Wisconsin Golden Gloves and will be able to host the major annual tournament for up-and-coming fighters.

Up a flight of makeshift steps behind the ring and behind a curtain is Briana Che, who is busy helping get everything ready backstage.

Che, the seventh ranked fighter in the United States, is wrapping the hands of a young white-collar-worker-turned-fighter, Mustafa Munishi. Munishi will be involved in the first fight of the night and is warming up furiously in this dressing area as people scurry about all around him making sure all is set.

Munishi heard about White Collar Boxing from a co-worker and decided to try it out. Now, just moments before his debut fight, he is sparring with Che and getting loose. Like many of the fighters on the evening's card, Munishi started working out at Ford's Gym to get into shape and train for this very moment.

As Munishi steels his nerves and gets ready, Che talks about her career and what could await her in the future, if everything goes according to plan.

Che has been working at the University of Wisconsin as a strength and conditioning coach for the past year and a half. But in her spare time she has quickly risen up the ranks of amateur boxing and is eyeing a spot on the 2020 United States Olympic Boxing team.

"So, I've been boxing for about a year and a half," Che says. "It's super exciting. I'm excited for the journey I've been on and the process and hoping to come out of it with a big win. It would be goal accomplished to be in the 2020 Olympics. Kind of like a dream come true."

Che is 8-1 in her career, with another bout potentially happening later this month. After that she will be in Salt Lake City in December for the Olympic qualifiers, where anything could happen.

"It's been a good run and it is still going, so it's been really good," Che says. "My goal is I'm just going to take it fight by fight. My goal right now is to be in the Olympic tryouts."

Che has fought opponents from all over the country and is confident that she will perform well when it's time to qualify. Che says fighting is just in her blood.

"Boxing has always been a sport I wanted to do even from a really young age," she says. "I remember watching Mike Tyson a lot when I was younger. My parents thought that I was a little over aggressive anyways and I thought I'd be good at boxing. I decided I might as well do something that I want to do."

Che is not yet sure if her fight tentatively scheduled for November 17 will go down. Finding opponents isn't always easy. But, regardless, her future is bright and will hopefully include wearing the colors of the United States in the ultimate competition.

By now, the fight-hungry crowd has encompassed the entire ring area. The national anthem is played, followed by the introduction of the first fight of the night.

The sound of a big punch punctuates the air. This time, however, it's no warm up. The crowd lets out a resounding roar. Munishi has tagged his opponent hard with a right hook and the fight is on.

The crowd makes the fight feel major. Munishi wins when his opponent's shoulder is injured. If the ending is anti-climactic, it is made up for by the pace and fury of each ensuing bout.

The real winners are the coffers of the Bob Lynch Boxing Foundation and the young athletes the foundation supports, for whom this fundraiser is clearly a rousing success.

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