

Tarver's bout tops Showtime card at casino - Joplin Globe

Written by Administrator
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MIAMI, Okla. — MIAMI, Okla. — It's billed as the biggest event ever to hit Buffalo Run.

And with good reason.

With two championship fights, three undefeated boxers, a former light heavyweight champion making his heavyweight debut and the son of a former world champion all on the card, tonight's Showtime boxing program is nothing short of spectacular.

"This

is by far the most high-profiled fight we've ever had here, and we've had a lot of fights here," said Tony Holden, retired promoter who played a big role in landing this event over venues in Las Vegas, New York and Texas among other places. "For a town like Miami, Okla., ... (Antonio) Tarver is going to enter the ring in our hometown on Showtime Network ... what an impact that is for this Four-State Area. I've worked with a lot of these guys, and it's great to have them come to our hometown and get to do the sport that I love so much."

Antonio Tarver, former light heavyweight champion, ends a 17-month absence from the ring and steps up to the heavyweight division for the first time. He fights Nagy Aguilera in a scheduled 10-round bout as the feature fight at the Showplace in Buffalo Run Casino.

The co-feature, also to be televised by Showtime, pairs undefeated Shawn Porter and Hector Munoz in a 10-rounder for the vacant NABF welterweight championship.

Ronald Hearn, the son of former champion Thomas "Hitman" Hearn, is in the first fight. Unbeaten Lateef Kayode, a powerful puncher who's won 12 of his 13 fights by knockout, and Epifanio Mendez square off for the NABF cruiserweight title, and undefeated Anthony Dirrell goes for his 20th victory in the third bout..

Doors at the casino's Showplace will open at 7. The first fight will begin at 7:45, and the final two bouts will be televised on Showtime starting at 10.

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Tickets, priced at \$40, \$60 and \$95, are still available and can be purchased at the casino box office or online at www.ticketstorm.com.

Tarver weighed in Thursday afternoon at 221 pounds, 11 pounds lighter than his opponent. He sees tonight's bout as his first step toward his dream to become the heavyweight champion of the world.

"We had a great training camp," Tarver said. "I can tote the weight. I feel like I'm a work in progress. You're not going to see everything (tonight) but you'll see enough. There are a lot of unknowns out there. Can I hurt these big guys? Can I take their punch? That's the unknown, and that's why we fight. I think I can."

"I believe he can make an impact," promoter Gary Shaw said. "I don't say it because I promote him. I look at the division, I look at all the names and I believe his time is now. He struggled with the weight (as a light heavyweight) to get down to 175."

Aguilera, a 24-year-old, has registered 11 knockouts in his three-year pro career.

"We promise a good show," Aguilera said.

"It's going to be a great fight," said Lou Savarese, Aguilera's promoter. "We respect Antonio very much. We don't fear him. Nagy is coming off a loss, and there are three ways you can handle a loss. One is to quit, one is to go out and do the same thing you've been doing and the third one is to change. That's what Nagy did. He trained hard. The only knock on Nagy has been his shape. This might be the best shape I've seen him in his whole pro career."

"To his credit (Tarver) didn't choose an easy opponent for his first fight," Shaw said. "Normally the first fight, you take someone to warm up your career at a different weight, and the promoter makes sure it's a one- or two-round fight, nothing over the fighter's head. To Antonio's credit he said I want a real test because if I can't win the fight, than what am I doing and where am I going."

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The welterweight title combatants both weighed in at just over 146 pounds.

“It’s all been put together in the gym,” said Porter, who’s trained by his father Kenneth. “My team, we’ve done a wonderful job in these last few weeks leading up to this fight. All the pieces are put together. I’m 16-0, 13 knockouts, and I’m looking for 17 (tonight). See you soon.”

“This is going to be the real Rocky story right here,” Munoz said. “This guy is undefeated, I have a great heart, my fighting spirit. We’re coming to win this fight, coming to take that title home. Three amateur fights, and I’m fighting these big dogs. I come to bring it. You won’t see me get knocked out. I’m coming straight, and I’m not going to give up for nothing. You’ll have to (take) me out on a stretcher.”

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