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IN THE SPOTLIGHT



THE OBSERVER

Photo/Illustration by Brandon Keelean and Kevin Song

Finals garner attention from ESPN

By ISAAC LORTON
Sports Writer

Last year, the Bengal Bouts finals were streamed for the first time online by UND.com. This year, ESPN has joined the show.

In mid-October, Doug Loughrey, the head of boxing for ESPN3, which includes the weekly production of "Friday Night Fights," contacted senior captain and president Alex Oloriz. Loughrey was inclined to have ESPN3 team up with UND.com to put on a production of the final round of Bengal Bouts.

"Loughrey said he has been interested in doing [Bengal Bouts] in years past, but hasn't been able to get enough momentum to get it done," Oloriz said. "This year, he wanted to get a head start and really wanted to make it happen. I thought it would be a great thing for ESPN to pick up and help produce and lift up the promotional value."

Although excited at the opportunity, Oloriz was skeptical and did not want to get his hopes up, he said.

"The first phone call was pretty cool," Oloriz said. "But given the history of trying to do

new stuff [with Bengal Bouts], it was going to be pretty tough. I was thinking it was a hyped dream. When he described it on the phone, it sounded awesome and I really didn't think it was going to happen. But as things progressed and we talked to the right people, things just kept moving forward."

One camera angle was used by UND.com for all of the final fights last year. This year, there will be five cameras catching every bit of action.

"There will be five camera angles, replays and zoom-out camera," Oloriz said. "It will be like 'Friday Night Fights' production. And there's going to be a logo on the mat of the Bengal Bouts Tiger. Those are the big additions. Color commentary will be done by [Irish junior] Josh Whelan a boxer. And the local radio morning show host John Thompson of 'J.T. in the Morning' will be doing the emceeing. When they are streaming the video, both UND and ESPN, ESPN is providing templates from Friday Night Fights to provide intros for the fighters."

Oloriz and senior marketing vice president and captain Jeff Ulrich said there is a lot of

potential in this partnership, especially for the missions in Bangladesh.

"The biggest possibility [for partnering with ESPN], is getting the mission aspect of Bengal Bouts out there," Oloriz said. "One of the things that swung us, is [ESPN] said they really want to promote the mission aspect. They are going to be talking about how to donate and have details broadcasting on how to donate throughout the fight. It will highlight our mission and make it easy to donate. Advertising that process and getting that out to more people, will bring in good things for the missions later."

Ulrich said ESPN will add to the overall experience of Bengal Bouts now and in the future.

"One, [the partnership with ESPN] increases the viewership of the Bengal Bouts," Ulrich said. "Whenever you can increase your viewership, you increase the people who can participate or can donate or want to come in the future. Secondly, it increases the legitimacy or classiness of the tournament. It makes it cooler."

As for why ESPN wanted to partner with Bengal Bouts,



MICHAEL KRAMM | The Observer

Senior Mike Broghammer connects on a powerful right jab in a semifinal fight against MBA student Sean Lischke on Tuesday.

Oloriz said he could only guess. "[ESPN] came to us and wanted to emphasize what we do because ... it is unheard of," Oloriz said. "They are advertising pure competition and the mission aspect. It's refreshing, for the audience and the sport."

In new territory and with the whole world able to look

on, there would seem to be an added pressure, but Oloriz said he does not think ESPN will change the essence of the fights.

"There's plenty of pressure anyway," Oloriz said. "Can't add anymore."

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Oloriz ends Bengal Bouts ascent as president

By CASEY KARNES
Sports Writer

Looking out over Purcell Pavilion, senior captain Alex Oloriz reminisced on his past fights there, and looked forward to returning one last time.

"It takes six full months. If you stick it out, you can make it here," Oloriz said. "There's nothing like it. Every time the crowd roars you get an extra burst."

Oloriz, who compares his fighting style to the Rolling Stones song "Sympathy for the Devil," is no stranger to center stage at Purcell, having made it to the finals all three years he has been involved with Bengal Bouts. He entered the program as a freshman with no previous boxing experience, but quickly made an impact. His rapid ascent surprised no one more than himself.

"When I first sparred, I sparred a senior, and he wrecked my nose. I didn't have any expectations going in, I was just going to go out and do my best," Oloriz said. "I won my first fight, and it was hard. And the next one, I won, and it was hard, but I still kept going. And finally, I was like, 'Oh man, I won three fights, I'm in the finals!' It just happened, I don't know. I just worked hard."

Oloriz was defeated by then senior captain John Maier his freshman year, and again by senior Matt Enzweiler in his sophomore year. Last year however, his first year as a junior captain, Oloriz was finally able

to pull out a victory by defeating Inoh Choe. While Oloriz savored his victory, his hunger for another title remains voracious.

"The training doesn't change. You still have to push yourself harder, think that there may be someone working as hard as you, or harder," said Oloriz. "When you're [with the club], I think [the workouts] are easy, because there's 200 guys going through the same thing as you."

Thanks to his stellar performance the last three years, and his overall contributions to the club, Oloriz has been promoted to president.

"There's a lot more responsibility, in terms of running the club and also training. So balancing that has been tough," Oloriz said. "After doing [boxing] for four years, you know the technique ... having to teach that to new boxers ... it can be frustrating. You have to explain it 50 different ways, but when you see a guy finally doing something right, and using his technique, and listening, you feel really good. It's rewarding, but it tests your patience sometimes."

Despite his emphasis on training, Oloriz never forgets that Bengal Bouts are about more than just the fights. While he has never been able to go to Bangladesh, he cited the children the Bouts benefit as a major inspiration.

"It's not all about winning," said Oloriz. "It's about the guys who don't win, but still go out and raise money. It validates what you do in there, missing



MICHAEL KRAMM | The Observer

Senior captain and president Alex Oloriz, right, ducks a punch thrown by junior Patrick McFarlane and strikes back with a right jab, in the quarterfinals Feb. 20. Oloriz won by unanimous decision.

time in school. I think that's something that has equal value as education, giving back. At the end of the fight, when you hear that bell ring, you know you've done something good."

As the end of his senior year approaches, Oloriz faces the end of his involvement with Bengal Bouts as well. But the lessons he learned through fighting and training will always stick with

him, he said.

"There's a ton of lessons from boxing. I've grown a lot these last four years," Oloriz said. "I've learned to stick to my guns, to be confident in what I do, while also pushing my limits. You can always push yourself harder, that's the lesson boxing has taught me. No complacency."

And while the end may feel bittersweet, Oloriz is looking

forward to walking out of the ring a champion one last time.

"There's no feeling in the world better than walking out of the ring with your hand held high, especially when you turn and see the friends who have come out to support you going wild," Oloriz said.

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Lally fights for fourth title with broader focus



MICHAEL KRAMM | The Observer

Senior captain and vice president Jack Lally, left, connects on a left hook in a quarterfinal fight against senior Nick Rowek on Feb. 20. Lally won the bout by unanimous decision. Lally has gone undefeated and has won his weight class for the past three years and is seeking the elusive fourth title.

By SAMANTHA ZUBA
Sports Writer

Senior captain Jack Lally will continue his pursuit of a fourth Bengal Bouts title in the finals Friday night. But if you ask him why he has stuck with boxing, success is not one of the reasons he will mention. For Lally, all of the memories count.

"The experience has been great," Lally said. "I've met some of my closest friends through the boxing program. ... Just being a part of a team is a cool thing.

"Having a mission and working for a goal, whether that goal be my own personal fitness, competition in the ring, or raising money for the Holy Cross missions, ... [it] has been something that has made my undergraduate experience here very fulfilling."

Lally's goals have changed during his years in the boxing program. When he first started out, he said he focused on improving himself individually as a boxer. As he invested himself in Bengal Bouts, he gained a broader perspective. The Holy Cross missions in Bangladesh that the tournament benefits and the team

aspect of the program became increasingly important, Lally said.

"It used to be all about the boxing when I was a freshman and sophomore," he said. "It used to be all about my own personal boxing and fun. The focus was on me and now the focus has changed to the good of the club."

Since Lally became a captain, he has been able to put those words into action. He has dedicated himself to helping young boxers develop their skills and understand the mission of Bengal Bouts. Ensuring that the charitable legacy of Bengal Bouts endures is important to Lally and his fellow captains, he said.

"As a captain we've all been responsible for coordinating workouts and essentially developing novice boxers," Lally said. "Just getting them familiar with the sport, teaching them ring tactics and strategy and then also with the other side of the program: promoting the fundraising and getting guys excited about that and showing them the work we're doing in Bangladesh."

Lally has found considerable success in his four-year

boxing career, but fun remains an important part of the package, he said. For Lally, winning his fights does not motivate him as much as the desire to enjoy his last tournament. He said he wants to exhibit the skills he has developed over his career and maintain the high standard for success that he has set. However, Lally said Bengal Bouts also means more than just the judge's decision at the end of his fight.

"As the years moved on and I've developed technically and physically, the pressure is now to maintain that and stay in the position that I've put myself," Lally said. "As far as the whole idea of winning a fourth title, that's not really what's driving me right now. I'm trying to enjoy the tournament because it's the last time I'm going to be in the ring, and it's really my last time with these guys, so I just want to soak it all up and have a lot of fun."

Lally certainly has much to be proud of when he looks back on his boxing career. He has won three titles and learned a lot about himself. He credited much of his development to time spent with

a mentor.

"The moments that defined me the most as a boxer were weekend morning workouts with Fr. Brian Daley," Lally said. "He took me under his wing ... and he showed me how to get good.

"Boxing is one of the most difficult sports to practice. It's one of the most physically demanding sports, mentally challenging sports ... You can work incredibly hard and still not succeed. That meant a lot to me to work with Father Daley."

Lally counts himself lucky

for being able to participate in Bengal Bouts and learn so much about his character. He said he hopes future boxers will persevere and learn similar lessons.

"If there's one thing I would want the younger boxers to know, it's that they're incredibly lucky to have what they have and that they should make the most of the opportunities they have now because they won't be around forever," Lally said.

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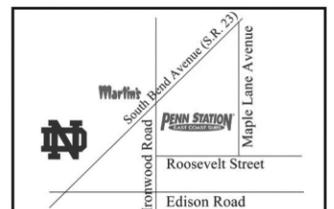
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Ulrich forges countless bonds through bouts

By MARY GREEN
Sports Writer

There's a funny story about how Bengal Bouts senior captain Jeff Ulrich earned his nickname, "Little Bear."

It started when he walked into his dorm, Knott Hall, for the first time freshman year. Upon arrival, he went to the check-in table and told members of hall staff his name, noticing that they all turned their attention to him when he said he was Jeff.

Unbeknownst to him, the Knott president that year was named Jeff Ullrich, only an extra L difference, and as a stocky guy with a beard, his nickname was "Grizz," as in a grizzly bear. The attention startled Ulrich for a second before he could tell them his full name, which drew an even more unexpected response.

"They smiled and looked at each other and said, 'We've been waiting for you, Little Bear,'" Ulrich said with a chuckle.

Despite his miniscule moniker, Ulrich has made a big impact on Bengal Bouts as a captain in both his junior and senior years.

Along with junior captain Daniel Yi, Ulrich is in charge of marketing for the annual boxing

event, which has grown to involve people and groups outside of the borders of Notre Dame. Throughout the year, he has been in contact with various local organizations that have an interest in helping with the tournament.

"I've met so many people in South Bend through Bengal Bouts because either they were involved in it or they want to donate to Bengal Bouts," he said.

For Ulrich, forming relationships is the best aspect of being involved in Bengal Bouts. There are bonds he builds with his fellow captains as they plan and run one of the most popular events on the Notre Dame campus, putting in numerous hours of work to ensure its success. Next are the connections he makes with his fellow boxers, especially the novices, who look up to him for support and advice as they develop into skilled fighters for the spring competition.

And of course, there are the bonds he forged with the people of Bangladesh when he travelled there a year and a half ago.

Ulrich decided to take the International Summer Service Learning Program trip in 2011, after competing twice in Bengal Bouts. He wanted to witness

firsthand the nation that inspired the mission of the charity competition, now in its 83rd year, and came back to the United States with a new perspective. The trip has defined him as a captain.

"Before I went, doing Bengal Bouts was mostly about the competition, the skill, the adrenaline," he said. "But after Bangladesh, [there's] definitely a new focus. Every time some dilemma comes up or some big decision comes up ... most times that decision comes down to, does it fit with our overall mission of serving the missions in Bangladesh?"

Completing the trip helped Ulrich reaffirm the real reason behind why he, and over 150 other students, makes the commitment to fight in Bengal Bouts each year.

"Obviously I knew that that was the mission from the very beginning, but having been there and seen what it does and the people that it affects and the priests that dedicate their entire lives to serving in Bangladesh, it shows me how easy it is and how little it is to commit four years to it when some priests and other people have committed their entire lives to it," he said.

The chemical engineering and philosophy/theology double



MACKENZIE SAIN | The Observer

Senior captain Jeff Ulrich sets up a one-two combination in a quarterfinal fight against senior Stephen Despina on Feb. 20.

major will take a fifth year to complete his studies, but per Bengal Bouts rules, will not be able to compete past a fourth year of eligibility. However, Ulrich still plans on staying active within the club next year, possibly as a judge or referee or helping to train boxers.

The approaching end to fighting has motivated Ulrich to set a goal of winning the 166-pound weight class, in his final opportunity to do so.

Regardless of the outcome, Ulrich said that his ultimate

objective, besides captaining another successful year of Bengal Bouts, is making sure that the program continues to grow larger and stronger each year.

"A sign of a good leader is that once they're gone, things still continue smoothly, not just when they're present," he said.

Win or lose, "Little Bear" has ensured that his print will remain on Bengal Bouts for years to come.

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138 pounds

Jack Lally vs Mark Frego



PATH TO THE FINALS

Lally

def. Matthew Fallon in preliminaries
def. Jackie Garvin in quarterfinals
def. Nick Rowek in semifinals

Frego

def. Derek Neidecker in preliminaries
def. Matthew Badya in quarterfinals
def. Dan Collins in semifinals

Lally is all about speed. He has quick feet, prefers to throw quick jabs and utilizes fast combinations to overwhelm his opponent. After attacking, Lally jumps back to prevent his opponent from countering.



Frego is a calculating fighter, picking the prime opportunities to go after his opponent. He possesses a strong right hook, which he throws mainly as a counter when his opponent comes at him with jabs.

144 pounds

Ben Eichler vs Kevin Dunne



PATH TO THE FINALS

Eichler

def. Gong Weng in preliminaries
def. Kieran Carroll in quarterfinals
def. Tony Lucisano in semifinals

Dunne

def. Jason Kippenbrock in preliminaries
def. John Iwanski in quarterfinals
def. Dan Rodriguez in semifinals

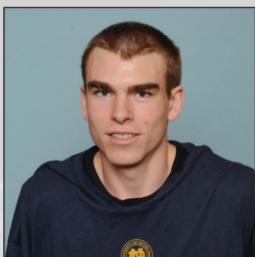
Eichler is best when on the attack. He typically will first go for the body and then follow up with a head shot. Of all his combinations, Eichler's best is an uppercut followed by a strong hook.



Dunne is a smart fighter who doesn't allow early deficits to get him down. He waits for the other fighter to make mistakes, jumping in with a strong jab when a chance presents itself. He also uses his stamina to outlast his opponent.

148 pounds

Devin Duffy vs Sean Hipskind



PATH TO THE FINALS

Duffy

def. Jack Taiclet in preliminaries
def. Eric Tomarello in quarterfinals
def. Brian Benedict in semifinals

Hipskind

def. Jackson Agraz in preliminaries
def. Kyle Buckley in quarterfinals
def. Pete McGinley in semifinals

Duffy is an absolute brawler. He relentlessly attacks his opponent from the opening bell and lives off the head shot. In addition to his devastating punches, Duffy also possesses good stamina that his opponent often cannot match.



Hipskind is a lanky fighter who prefers backing away from his opponent and using his length to connect on jabs. His length also prevents opponents from connecting on a high percentage of their counters.

155 pounds

Garrity McOsker vs Joey Kim



PATH TO THE FINALS

McOsker

def. Luke Miller in preliminaries
def. Michael Judd in quarterfinals
def. Kevin Kershnik in semifinals

Kim

def. Andrew Koester in preliminaries
def. Brendan Andrew in semifinals
def. Jack Healy in semifinals

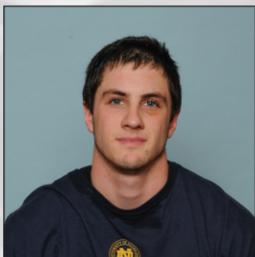
McOsker fights with poise and purpose, relentlessly attacking his opponent with well-timed combinations of jabs and uppercuts. He also displays impressive endurance as he typically shows no signs of tiring deep into a fight.



Kim is a tall, wiry fighter with a strong right hook, which he uses to counter attacks. When an opponent tries to connect on head shots, Kim counters with either his devastating hook or a quick jab to his opponent's headgear.

162 pounds

Danny Leicht vs Chris DeLillo



PATH TO THE FINALS

Leicht

def. Mansfield Burlingame in preliminaries
def. Ryan Majsak in quarterfinals
def. Mike Flanigan in semifinals

DeLillo

def. Sean Himel in preliminaries
def. Brian Reddy in quarterfinals
def. Scott Rousseau in semifinals

Leicht is a smart boxer, using his brain to overcome what he may lack in size. He uses a head-body combination to tire out his opponent before going for the knockout with a big head shot.



DeLillo is a calculating fighter. He doesn't waste opportunities and keeps himself away from trouble. Opponents rarely catch DeLillo with his guard down. He uses a body jab and a right hook as his go-to combination.

166 pounds

Jeff Ulrich vs Patrick Shea



PATH TO THE FINALS

Ulrich

def. Kobe Ampofo in preliminaries
def. Stephen Despina in quarterfinals
def. Jimmy Bowers in semifinals

Shea

def. Gion Handal in preliminaries
def. Brian Garvin in semifinals
def. Gage O'Connell in semifinals

Ulrich has a defensive, yet effective fighting style. He protects his face with his gloves throughout the fight, but as soon as he spots an opportunity to advance he does so with strong, meticulous jabs to both the body and face.



Shea gets off to a strong start and maintains good separation throughout the fight. He lands a high percentage of his punches and is particularly adept at connecting on head shots.

168 pounds*Sunoh Choe vs Alex Oloriz***PATH TO THE FINALS****Choe**

def. Eric Krakowiak in quarterfinals
def. Zach Flint in semifinals

Choe's long reach and tremendous strength allow him overwhelm opponents, especially with hard jabs to the face. Choe also relies on his in-and-out method, delivering quick one-two punches to the face before retreating.

**Oloriz**

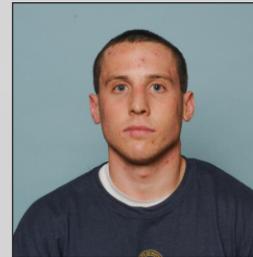
def. Patrick McFarlane in quarterfinals
def. Brett Geschke in semifinals

Oloriz is a quick fighter who constantly dodges punches and moves around the ring. He jabs with his right and proceeds to deliver a combination of body shots followed by powerful uppercuts.

176 pounds*Brett Sassetti vs Pat Bishop***PATH TO THE FINALS****Sassetti**

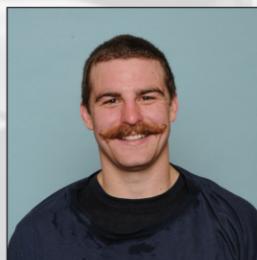
def. Charles Magiera in quarterfinals
def. Joey Stromberg in semifinals

Sassetti possesses great strength which helps him deliver powerful hooks to the body and jabs to the face of his opponent. With superior endurance, Sassetti also stays strong throughout the entire fight.

**Bishop**

def. Andrew Heldrich in quarterfinals
def. Bryan Cooley in semifinals

Bishop is a well-conditioned fighter whose intensity remains level from the first to the last round. He is also a technically sound fighter who likes to move around the ring and utilize a strong right hook.

185 pounds*Ryan Alberdi vs Brian Salvi***PATH TO THE FINALS****Alberdi**

def. Taylor Stein in quarterfinals
def. Brian Hartnett in semifinals

Alberdi has a cautious fighting style and typically waits for his opponent to attack first. Once the opponent does advance, Alberdi does not hold back. He utilizes strong one-two jabs to the head and the body to tire his opponent.

**Salvi**

def. Hank Duden in quarterfinals
def. Andrew Greybar in semifinals

Salvi is methodical and chooses opportune times to throw punches. His punches, often hooks, are extremely powerful and he goes for the knockout. He uses feints regularly in order to find an opening to strike.

194 pounds*Bobby Manfreda vs Ricky Neville***PATH TO THE FINALS****Manfreda**

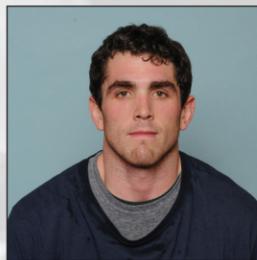
def. Andrew Braumann in quarterfinals
def. Tyler Plantz in semifinals

Manfreda uses his strength and height to his advantage. He delivers hooks to the side of his opponent's head and hard jabs to the face. He also remains strong through the entire match, allowing him to fight to the final bell.

**Neville**

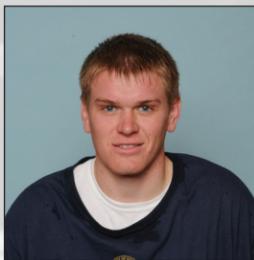
def. Sergi Filonow in quarterfinals
def. Eamon McOsker in semifinals

Neville typically gains the early advantage with a quick start. By constantly moving his feet and landing a high percentage of his punches, he gradually builds an advantage and prevents his opponent from gaining any momentum.

205 pounds*Brian Ellixson vs Brian Salat***PATH TO THE FINALS****Ellixson**

def. Erik Rayno in quarterfinals
def. Evan Escobedo in semifinals

Ellixson uses his long strong arms to fight advancements and deliver jabs on the offensive. He has the stamina to stay consistent throughout the entire match and mixes in quick attacks with longer engagements.

**Salat**

def. Robbie Hammer in quarterfinals
def. Chris Sarkis in semifinals

Salat fights with discipline. He tends to work inside for a one-two combination and sometimes an uppercut before retreating. His uppercut packs considerable power and he uses it often.

Heavyweight*Daniel Yi vs Mike Broghammer***PATH TO THE FINALS****Yi**

def. Ruben Carrion in quarterfinals
def. Bob Burkett in semifinals

Daniel Yi is a tough, aggressive fighter who is willing to stay in the middle of the ring and trade shots with his opponent rather than chase and evade. He has a heavy right hook, which he compliments with a left-handed jab.

**Broghammer**

def. Matt Boomer in quarterfinals
def. Sean Lischke in semifinals

Broghammer is an energetic fighter. He uses his long reach to keep his opponent at bay with his jab and he is not shy about throwing a series of dangerous right hooks to back it up. His straight right is effective as well.

Bishop embodies dual mission of Bengal Bouts

By COLE SCHIETINGER
Sports Writer

As a three-year boxer who served in Bangladesh last summer, senior captain Pat Bishop is one of the best representatives of the dual mission of Bengal Bouts. While he may train for months to compete in the ring, Bishop's main focus and motivator is not boxing, but instead serving the Holy Cross mission in Bangladesh, thousands of miles away, but still close to his heart.

Reflecting on his eight-week visit there last summer, Bishop said serving in Bangladesh helped provide perspective for his overall Bengal Bouts experience.

"It made everything I've done the last three years, or the previous two years and going forward this year, feel redeeming," Bishop said. "Just that experience alone was my favorite part of Bengal Bouts thus far, even though it didn't involve boxing. My favorite memory from these three years, would definitely be being in Bangladesh for eight weeks, really understanding why we fight, and seeing how much people appreciate it and what it does for them."

Fr. Leonard Shankar Rozario, one of the priests in Bangladesh, helped Bishop begin to understand Bengal Bouts' importance with a message for Bishop upon his arrival.

"Your labor bears the fruit of the Bengal Bouts mission so that as we state 'Strong bodies fight that weak bodies may be nourished,' I welcome you as a member of not only the Notre Dame men's boxing team, but also as a member of the Holy Cross community," Rozario said to Bishop. "Notre Dame and Bangladesh are 10,000 miles apart; you are the link between the two."

Bishop is also a respected leader among his peers, as his peers gave him the honor of serving as a Bengal Bouts captain.

"The junior captains last year and seniors from last year get together, and it's really up to the juniors because they're the guys that get to work with those [new captains]," Bishop said. "I had people tell me that I could be asked. I didn't want to give into that because regardless of whether I was asked or not, I was going to be a big part of [Bengal Bouts this year] anyways."

Even in high school, Bishop was a leader in sports, as he was the captain of his high school track team and a member of the wrestling team. In fact, Bishop said the combination of these two interests is what led him to boxing.

"The fitness part of [wrestling] definitely got me into boxing, but it was more being part of a team," Bishop said. "In high school, I was captain of the track team, so I like to have that leadership role and I enjoy being part of the team. I came into boxing not knowing anything about it, but I just wanted to be part of a team."

However, Bishop did not box freshman year, as he tried to



MICHAEL KRAMM | The Observer

Senior captain Pat Bishop, right, lands a convincing right jab on sophomore Bryan Cooley in a semifinals fight Tuesday. Bishop won by split decision. Bishop is seeking his first title in the 176-pound weight class against junior Brett Sassetti Friday.

walk on to the Notre Dame track team. When he first went to watch Bengal Bouts though, Bishop said he knew immediately that it was something he wanted to participate in.

"The first time I went to the bouts was the preliminaries round," Bishop said. "I was like 'This is cool,' so I went to all four rounds and I knew right there I was going to try next year."

Looking back on his decision, Bishop said he couldn't be happier.

"I've said all along, after last summer and my previous two years, that becoming part of the Bengal Bouts is the best decision I've made at Notre Dame, and it's definitely my favorite experience," Bishop said. "I may not have done great in the tournament, but I was putting the time in and trying my best, and I think that it has been a great investment of my time."

"The Bengal Bouts has taught me to do all you can, and that with the hope that hard work pays off in the end. I've really loved it, and would encourage anyone to participate."

Bishop has put a lot of time and effort into Bengal Bouts, but has received just as much in return. From his hard work in "The Pit" to his devotion to the Bengal Bouts mission, Bishop has worked tirelessly to help not only himself, but also those around him.

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Leicht's Bouts experience centers on service



MACKENZIE SAIN | The Observer

Senior captain Danny Leicht, right, ducks a right punch thrown by senior Ryan Majsak and aims an uppercut in a quarterfinal fight Feb. 20. Along with his captaincy, Leicht did volunteer work in Bangladesh for eight weeks over the summer. Leicht will fight senior Chris DeLillo in the 162-pound finals.

By **KIT LOUGHRAN**
Sports Writer

After boxing for three years, senior captain Danny Leicht recognizes that the sport of

boxing requires a unique mindset.

"It's kind of a weird mentality that we have to want to box. Maybe it's just stupidity," Leicht said.

To many people, boxing may seem foolish, as Leicht himself admitted. But while the idea of putting on a pair of gloves and stepping into a ring to fight another person may seem foolish, Leicht said there's undoubtedly a thrill that comes along with the sport.

"The workout in boxing is incredible," Leicht said. "It's unlike anything I've ever done."

Leicht said that his days of playing baseball and basketball in high school don't compare to the intensity of boxing.

Leicht has also found something greater than just the workout through his experience with Bengal Bouts because the program has more to it than just boxing. Bengal Bouts and its mission gives boxers an inspiring reason to get in the ring and take some hits to the head and Leicht said that mission has significantly influenced his participation in Bengal Bouts.

"I learned about the mission sophomore year and became really interested when I found out the boxers could go to Bangladesh to serve," Leicht said.

Leicht and three other Bengal Bouts boxers traveled to the country last summer

for eight weeks to volunteer. They taught English to the children in the schools, visited villages and helped the priests and sisters of the Catholic missionaries.

"It was an awesome experience," Leicht said.

Leicht said it was great to have the opportunity to see first-hand the impact Bengal Bouts has on the Bengali community.

Now in his third year in Bengal Bouts, Leicht said he has really enjoyed being a captain during his final year.

"As a captain, I like that we have the responsibility of teaching the younger guys both about boxing and about the mission," Leicht said. "And, having been to Bangladesh, I've been happy to tell those guys what I can about my experiences."

As a captain preparing for the tournament, Leicht has been training since the middle of fall semester.

"October is the beginning of novice season, so we have the younger guys come out earlier and teach them the basic punches and try to get in shape," Leicht. "Then, around right after Thanksgiving break, everyone is getting back

into it."

Last year, Leicht made it to the semifinals, but lost to his good friend Joey Kim, one of his good friends. This year Leicht won his semifinals fight over sophomore Mike Flanigan and will face fellow senior Chris DeLillo in finals of the 162-pound weight division.

With the end of his senior year quickly approaching, Leicht has been reflecting on the end of his Bengal Bouts career, but said his favorite aspect of Notre Dame is the people he has encountered.

"It may sound cliché, but at a time when you're on your own and figuring out who you are, being able to meet people from all different walks of life is definitely my favorite part," he said.

Leicht found a niche in Bengal Bouts that provided not only a great workout aspect that got him to the gym, but also an opportunity to serve in Bangladesh. While he may or may not take home the first-place hardware, Leicht will take his Bengal Bouts experience with him after graduation.

Contact Kit Loughran at kloughr1@nd.edu

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Alberdi's hard work leads to memorable career

By A.J. GODEAUX
Sports Writer

Ryan Alberdi lets his fists speak for him. The soft spoken, former Sorin resident from Clearwater, Fla. is not like the typical boxer when it comes to self-promotion outside of the ring — all of his talking begins when the bell rings.

Alberdi's defining feature is a mustache thicker than the Brazilian Amazon — the only way to describe it is just plain awesome. A four-month project, Alberdi was clearly proud of his lip foliage.

"It started for Movember, and afterward I decided I'd keep it for Bengal Bouts," Alberdi said. "I curl it now, like an old school 1920s boxer."

Like many Bengal Bouts participants, Alberdi wrestled all four years in high school. Upon his arrival to Notre Dame, Bengal Bouts filled the void wrestling left.

"[One-on competition] was something I really missed ... Just knowing that everyone's watching you, and that if you make a mistake there's no one else to blame but yourself."

Unlike some other fighters who like to get pumped up before a fight, Alberdi claimed he fights better when he's calm. In fact, Alberdi's prefight routine is more like a lazy Sunday afternoon than preparation for the intense one-on-one competition he so craves.

"Going back to wrestling, I always make myself a peanut butter, banana and honey sandwich," he said. "I'll listen to some mellow music and just lie down."

That calm nature translates to his fighting style as well. A defensive fighter, Alberdi waits for his opportunities, not forcing anything.

"I just sit back, waiting on openings," he said. "I try to let them come, let them attack me and wait for those opportunities to move forward."

As a freshman novice, Alberdi's inaugural Bengal Bouts ended the way most novices do, with a first-round loss. Following the loss though, Alberdi turned his newfound hobby into a year round obsession. He started training at a boxing gym in his hometown of Clearwater, which Alberdi said was a learning experience.

"At the beginning of the summer I sparred my trainer and I had a tendency to lean over in my stance from wrestling," he said. "He broke my nose. Then I sparred him at the end of the summer, and he broke my nose again."

Despite the broken bones, Alberdi came back a different fighter his sophomore year. Fighting in the 160-pound division, he advanced all the way to the finals before succumbing to the first seed Robert Powers. After putting on weight in the summer, he came back as a junior with

unfinished business, this time in the 171-pound division. In a defensive fight, Alberdi defeated Jake Joe to take the crown, citing it as his favorite memory of Bengal Bouts.

"It's an awesome feeling, being in the finals," he said. "And when you win and you're in the center, everyone's around you, it's great."

It's that feeling which has Alberdi wanting to ride off into the sunset as a two-time champion. It won't be easy, and Alberdi is the first to say that. If the bracket goes as expected, Alberdi will face off with another past champion, Joe Salvi, in the 176 pound division finals.

Still, Alberdi said he believes his training has set him up for a repeat. Despite the time commitment of his summer research, Alberdi was still able to train a few days a week over the

summer, steadily increasing the rigor which peaked after winter break. Since then, he has been training six to seven days a week.

Despite this being his last Bengal Bouts as a boxer, Alberdi was accepted to Notre Dame's grad school to pursue a Ph.D. in civil engineering. Alberdi said he has left the door open to coming back as a coach.

"I couldn't fight because you can only fight for four years," he said. "But I'd love to come back as a coach or anyway I could help out."

Alberdi's Bengal Bouts career will end with the shaving of his mustache on Friday night, but he's thrilled with the opportunities and memories Bengal Bouts has given him.

Contact A.J. Godeaux at agodeaux@nd.edu



JULIE HERDER | The Observer

Senior captain Ryan Alberdi, left, lands a left body shot in a quarterfinal matchup against senior Taylor Stein on Feb. 20.

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Choe finishes long journey as senior captain

By GREG HADLEY
Sports Writer

Sunoh Choe's path to his second Bengal Bouts tournament has been a long and interesting one. It started in Hawaii, moved to Santa Clara, Calif., then to Mexico, and most recently culminated in a championship last year and a captainship this season.

A senior from Kona, Hawaii, Choe won the 154-pound weight division last year, in his very first Bengal Bouts. It was not, however, his first experience with the sport. He started boxing as a freshman at Santa Clara University.

"I was at Santa Clara and during my freshman year, my older brother who was here started doing Bengal Bouts and he got me into boxing," Choe said. "I did a year [of boxing] at Santa Clara

and then I studied a year abroad. So I already had a year of experience when I got here."

For his sophomore year, Choe studied in Mexico and continued to hone his boxing skills while immersing himself in the new culture.

"I boxed a little bit while I was down there," Choe said. "I learned a little bit of the Mexican style. I was the only one from my school there, so I immersed myself with the locals. I stayed two semesters because I really wanted to learn the language fully and have a more genuine experience."

Choe then transferred to Notre Dame as a junior and immediately got involved with Bengal Bouts.

"My brother put Bengal Bouts in my head, and it was probably about 50 percent of the reason why I transferred here, I'm not going to lie," he said. "In terms

of weather, it was a bad choice, but the school is obviously better here, I have my siblings [and] Bengal Bouts."

Choe's experience at Santa Clara prepared him well for Notre Dame boxing. At Santa Clara, he was part of an "intense" team that competed against other colleges and had more coaches than athletes. Still, he said he prefers Notre Dame's boxing club and the atmosphere of the team.

"I definitely got more individual attention [at Santa Clara], but I like the program here better because it's going for a good cause and there are like 200 boxers... so you actually feel like you're on a team," Choe said. "I really like training with other people around. I feel like I get more motivated when I see other guys working out. I really like to work out with my friends as well."

Last season, Choe and his brother both advanced to the finals in their respective weight classes, where Choe claimed the championship.

"I was really grateful to have won," Choe said. "Originally, my brother and I, our goal was to get the leather jacket, which you get if you make the finals, so both of us and a friend of ours got to the finals, and we said 'Now we got to win this too!' It's a great feeling. You get a little more credibility. I'm not the biggest guy [on the team] so it's nice to have the credibility that you're a boxing champ."

After the season ended last year, Choe received a call from a graduating captain, who asked him to take over as captain for the upcoming season. His one requirement?

"He wanted me to help other

guys get better," Choe said. "His one condition was ... he wanted me to start reaching out to everyone on the team."

As a captain, Choe has more responsibilities than this though. In addition to training, and fighting, captains also have to organize advertising for the tournament and merchandise for the club. Still, his biggest responsibility remains helping other fighters.

"I think one good thing about being captain is that if I do offer advice or corner people off [to talk to them], people don't think I'm over my head or being arrogant," Choe explains.

However, when he enters the ring, Choe ceases to be a captain and is solely a competitor, which means he has no mercy. His fight strategy revolves around deflating his opponent's hopes early on in the match.

"It depends on who I'm going up against, but usually I try to be the aggressor," Choe said. "I have this saying; 'Everyone's decent for the first 20 seconds until they get hit.' So my goal is always to scare them early on. It sounds really mean, but that's kind of a strategy. Once you bring down their morale in a spar or a fight, it's easier for the aggressor. I also like to box rather than brawl. I prefer technique over just slugging it out."

Of course, Bengal Bouts is about more than just boxing, Choe said. As captain, Choe helps coordinate the fundraising aspect of the Bouts. It is a duty that he said he appreciates but also finds easy, because it goes to such a good cause.

"One hundred percent of the proceeds go to the mission," Choe said. "That makes our fundraising easier. When we tell people, [if] we say it's just a boxing club, most people wouldn't buy our tickets or our ads but when I tell them that it goes to a mission and that last year we raised over \$200,000 for people in Bangladesh...it makes our job a lot easier, because people are more willing to buy a ticket if they know it goes to charity. And I like that, because at least I can say I'm not doing boxing just so I can hit people."

In only two years, Choe has learned to appreciate the tradition and mission of Bengal Bouts.

"If I throw out those numbers, that [Bengal Bouts]'s been going on for over eighty years, there's over 200 boxers, and the amount of money we raise, over a million [dollars] since we started, that's the really impressive part of Bengal Bouts for me," he said. "There was this random [stranger] from Germany who messaged me over Facebook, who follows Bengal Bouts and watches the videos and knows me. That's the awesome thing about Bengal Bouts."

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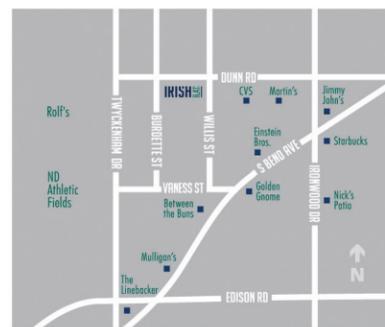
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LILY KANG | The Observer

Senior captain Sunoh Choe, right, connects lands a punch on Zach Flint during a semifinals fight Tuesday. Choe won the fight by unanimous decision and will face fellow senior captain Alex Oloriz in the 168-pound division finals. Choe won last year's 154-pound division finals by split decision over current sophomore Garrity McOsker.

STRONG BODIES FIGHT

Ten captains led the Bengal Bouts program this year, including seven seniors, two juniors and one law student. All 10 captains advanced to the finals of their respective weight classes this year.



JULIE HERDER | The Observer

Senior captain Ryan Alberdi, right, lands a punch on senior Taylor Stein during a quarterfinals fight.



MACKENZIE SAIN | The Observer

Senior captain Jeff Ulrich, left, dodges a punch from senior Stephen Despins during a quarterfinals fight.



JULIE HERDER | The Observer

Junior captain Daniel Yi, left, dodges a punch from junior Ruben Carrion during a quarterfinals fight.



JULIE HERDER | The Observer

Junior captain Brett Sasseti, right, connects on a punch during a quarterfinals fight against sophomore Charles Magiera on Feb. 20.



JULIE HERDER | The Observer

Law student captain Brian Ellixson, left, throws a punch during a quarterfinals fight against freshman Erik Rayno, right, on Feb. 20.