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Portland Boxing Club's June 2019 Newsletter.

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# PORTLAND BOXING CLUB

25 YEARS

PORTLAND, MAINE CLUB

1992 ★ MAKING CHAMPIONS & GOOD CITIZENS FOR 25 YEARS ★ 2017



Portland Boxing Club's Alec Dacar (right) connects with Estevan Hincapie at Lewiston Fight Night on May 25, 2019.

## Lewiston Fight Night

Portland Boxing Club's Alec Dacar and Mario Wilborn competed at Lewiston Fight Night on Saturday May 25, 2019 at the Longley School in Lewiston, ME.

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after two close rounds Dacar scored a knock down and a standing eight count in the third round to seal the victory.

PBC's Mario Wilborn, a novice class heavyweight (201 lbs) of Portland, lost a 4-1 majority decision to Robert Hetherman of Harpswell, ME. Although Wilborn landed multiple strong body shots, it was not enough for the win over the faster, busier Hetherman.



The New England Team at the 2019 National Golden Gloves Tournament of Champions in Chattanooga, TN. Portland Boxing Club's Liz Leddy is in the front left of the photo.

### National Golden Gloves Tournament of Champions

PBC's Liz Leddy was on the New England Team at the National Golden Gloves Tournament of Champions at the Chattanooga Convention Center in Chattanooga, TN on May 11, 2019. Leddy, an open class lightweight (132 lbs),

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of thirty teams.



Portland Boxing Club's Nate Nappi graduated from the University of Southern Maine on Saturday, May 11, 2019.

### Congratulations Graduates

Portland Boxing Club's Nathan Nappi, a novice class light welterweight (141 lbs) from Portland, graduated from the University of Southern Maine on May 11, 2019 with a double degree in Marketing and Business Management. Nappi is completing his internship at USM's Athletic Department then embarking on a two month backpacking trip across Europe before starting his career.

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lbs) from South Portland, will be graduating from South Portland High School on June 9, 2019.



Portland Boxing Club volunteer Durward Ferland.

### Volunteer of the Month

As many of you know, the Portland Boxing Club is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization with an all-volunteer staff. Starting this month, we will be honoring our volunteers in this newsletter from time to time.

This month, we would like to give a big “Thank You” and shout out to Durward Ferland Jr. His volunteer services to the Portland Boxing Club are priceless. Not only is he our resident volunteer photographer (Kineo Photography) donating some of the most amazing action photos, but he also takes care of our website, our Facebook page, our membership system, and our on-line store processing merchandise orders. He organizes the Red Corner Club, prepares

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is also very generous to some of our boxers in need, helping them find housing and jobs. In addition to all of this, Durward holds down an impressive day job as Partner at Wipfli LLP, the 19th largest accounting and consulting firm in the US.

I am inserting this recognition into this newsletter with his objection noted! As is the case with true volunteers, they do not want to be recognized and prefer to stay behind the scenes. I appreciate that, but I think it is important to honor the people who help keep the Portland Boxing Club in business.

Thanks, Durward!

Bob Russo, President and Head Coach



Portland Boxing Club president and head coach Bob Russo (left) has been named as National President of the Golden Gloves of America. *Photo courtesy Kineo Photography.*

## Russo Elected as National President of Golden Gloves of America

Bob Russo was in grade school when he began to study the physical processes of the sweet science.

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to the sport, serving as a glove boy at fights at the Portland Expo.

Before long, Russo's love for boxing became his life's passion. Russo had a fifth-row ringside seat with his family when Muhammad Ali won by a first-round knockout over Sonny Liston in their heavyweight championship bout in May 1965 in Lewiston, Maine.

When it came to his own boxing career, Russo wasn't able to fight beyond the club level because of a medical condition that left him legally blind in one eye. But he has continually stayed involved in the sport.

During a lifetime devoted to the fight game, Russo, 64, has served as a coach/mentor/father figure to a countless number of boxers, both amateur and professional, that he's trained at his Portland Boxing Club over the past 27 years. He has coached at the Olympic Trials, promoted 104 boxing shows in Maine and in recent years served as the Executive Director of the New England Golden Gloves.

In 2013, Russo was inducted into the Maine Sports Hall of Fame as a boxing coach. This past winter, he was a commanding figure in the 73rd renewal of what was an extremely successful Greater Lowell/Central New England Golden Gloves Tournament at the Lowell Memorial Auditorium.

Now Russo's sage voice of reason and knowledge when it comes to bringing out the best in everyone associated with the local amateur boxing scene will be heard nationally.

At the Golden Gloves National Tournament of Champions in Chattanooga, Tenn., earlier this month, Russo was elected national president of the Golden Gloves of America. In this position Russo will lead all 30 Golden Gloves franchises throughout the United States.

"Boxing is my world and that's what makes this such a big honor for me because it's what I do," said Russo. "A big part of my role with the New England Golden Gloves is constantly trying to improve what we do. That's what I'm going to work at doing in this position with all the Golden Gloves franchises.

"Golden Gloves has always been and still is the most respected and

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a reason to come watch."

Russo feels boxing has lost a generation of sports fans who have made the switch to mixed martial arts (MMA) fighting. His goal is to win over those lost fans and get them to come back to Golden Gloves shows throughout the country.

"I was a glove boy at like eight, nine years old," said Russo. "That's how I started. It just progressed from there. Boxing became an obsession for me. Someone said, 'Boxing is more than a sport, it's an obsession.' They were right.

"That's why we need to better promote ourselves, and try to get that generation of young fans we've lost to the MMA back. We need to reintroduce ourselves to the young fans again. We'll always have a hardcore group of fans, but you just need to keep renewing those fans. I don't think we've done a good job of that and that's what needs to happen. We need to better market ourselves. It's a different world. Social media is huge and there are a lot of people and franchises that kind of do the same thing over and over and aren't keeping up with the times."

Russo has never pulled any punches, in or out of the ring. Not one to take a step backward in pursuit of his goals, Russo learned the finer points of the sport while training in Las Vegas under the watchful eye of Chuck Bodak, a World Boxing Hall of Fame inductee who worked with over 50 world champions.

"Working with Chuck Bodak was the biggest shot in the arm for me as far as getting really educated as a trainer," said Russo. "I thought I knew what I was doing, but I really didn't. He was a great basics coach and boxing is all about the basics. You can be a great athlete and super strong and quick, but those are just extra attributes. You need to have good basics, like good balance. That's the kind of teacher he was and that's the kind of trainer I became.

"Working with him is really where I got all my knowledge. That was my college education in boxing, with Chuck in Las Vegas."

Now Russo is ready to spread this knowledge to Golden Gloves franchise

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"Amateur boxing and the Golden Gloves is an awesome youth development program because we deal with a lot of at-risk kids," said Russo. "Many of these kids come from broken families. They don't fit into other sports in a lot of cases. So they gravitate towards boxing and it's a way to get them into a healthy lifestyle with good coaches and good mentoring.

"People need to know that more. The new generation of fans needs to be reintroduced to that and all the good that comes from boxing in the Golden Gloves."

*This article by Carmine Frongillo was published in the Lowell Sun on May 25, 2019. Reprinted with permission.*



Portland Boxing Club's Liz Leddy (left), Bobby Russo and Lisa Kuronya Coombs (right) in this YEAR photo.

## **Women Boxing Pioneers - Stablemates Lisa Kuronya Coombs and Lisa Leddy Inspiring a New Generation of Females**

Amateur boxers come in all sizes and shapes, often coming from much different backgrounds, following their individual dreams in their thoroughly unique ways along their arduous journeys.



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Liz Leddy, have combined to capture eight national titles, including a stretch in which they successfully pioneered equality for women boxers in the United States.

They are as diametrically opposed as any two boxers, excluding their drives to excellence through hard work and preparation. Not only a naturally gifted athlete, Coombs holds a Bachelor of Science degree with a concentration in Environmental Science from West Chester University, and was a former Director of Environmental Health and Science at Bowdoin College. Leddy was homeless for much of her teen years, fighting daily in the streets of Portland, addicted to drugs and alcohol.

Their common denominator, so to speak, is Portland Boxing Club president and head coach, Bobby Russo, who is also the National Vice President of the Golden Gloves of America. "Lisa and Liz are polar opposites," Russo said. "Lisa is an environmental scientist who taught at Bowdoin, Liz was 13 when she started living on the streets, which began years of her drug and alcohol abuse.

"Lisa is a dedicated, smart, committed person who likes competition. She's built like an athlete, long and lean. She's always in ridiculously good shape. Lisa didn't necessarily need boxing in her life. The first thing I said to Liz was that she had to cover up her Skinhead tattoo when she was in the gym. Twenty-plus years later and she's still fighting. She'll be in the gym the rest of her life because boxing saved her life. She is the poster child for what amateur boxing can do for some kids.

"They're pioneers. Women boxers weren't allowed to stay at the Olympic Training Center. They had to pay for their plane tickets, hotel and food at tournaments, unlike men, and together Lisa and Liz helped get the rules changed. The Portland Boxing Club is 27 years old and we've won 212 championships. Winning is the motivating factor and it's great to make champions, but helping make good citizens, changing the lives of so many kids, is priceless."

Coombs started boxing in 2000, almost by accident, because she landed a job in Portland, where she found Russo and the Portland Boxing Club. She had done some kickboxing workouts and enjoyed how she felt, lost some weight,

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but she soon got hooked on the sports' demands like hard work, discipline and athleticism. Russo taught her to become a boxer and use her jab to out-box opponents.

She has a remarkable 46-6 amateur record, highlighted by the 2005 Ringside World Championship and five national titles (2006, 2007 & 2008 National Golden Gloves, 2006 & 2007 USA Boxing National Championships).

"I'm a hard worker and disciplined," Coombs remarked, "but nothing compares to the discipline and hard work that it takes to compete in boxing at a high level. It's indescribable. I managed a full-time, professional career in the consulting industry while competing at the highest level possible at the time. I learned a lot about myself and my compass for hard work and discipline has been re-centered. I believe that I can accomplish anything because nothing is quite as challenging as what I endured during this period in my life. I learned that hard work and discipline is rewarded.

USA Boxing proved to me with amazing travel opportunities, and I met so many diverse, strong, and brave women along the way. In my typical social setting, I would not have crossed paths with the phenomenal ladies who became my teammates. I will be forever bonded with my fellow females of the era - Franchon Crews-Dezum, Queen Underwood, Marlen Esparza, Carryey Barry and Emily Klinefelter - to name a few."

Coombs was ahead of her time in one respect, women's professional boxing didn't afford boxers the same opportunities as it does today. She also got a relatively late start in boxing at 26. "Honestly," Lisa adds, "I was satisfied with my accomplishments and my original goal of having 10 fights was fulfilled and surpassed. I was a pioneer and most importantly an advocate of equal treatment of women in the sport of boxing. I witnessed the inauguration of women's boxing in the 2012 Olympic Games, and proudly watched Claressa Shields and Marlen Esparza on the podium as the only U.S. boxer to medal in years. Some of the same women that I traveled around the world with as part of Team USA Boxing had opportunities that I never had, and that fulfilled me."

Leddy lived in an entirely different world from which she most likely never would have escaped from without boxing.

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safe on the street. It was almost like a drug, too volatile; drugs and alcohol played a big part. Even the bad crowd wanted me to straighten out. They were boxing fans. It was amazing back then, around the Tyson-Holyfield fight. I eventually got an ultimate to get off the street. I went to the Portland Boxing Club and wanted to fit in there with a new, respectful group. I kept getting blindsided every few months, though. Fighting was a triumph for me because I did something right. I still wasn't winning, but the stars aligned, and I pulled it off. Boxing has been a carrier that's held me afloat."

Leddy captured gold medals at the 2001, 2012 and 2017 National Golden Gloves Tournament. She was supposed to be part of Team USA that traveled to Ireland, but Liz was the lone American who actually fought.

"I built up a good fan base there," she noted. "I fought Katie Taylor (the reigning undisputed world lightweight champion as a pro, Olympic gold medalist and 5-time amateur world champion) and bloodied her nose two nights in a row. I knew my style was good if I could do that against her."

Liz hasn't hung-up her gloves, yet. In fact, she plans to turn pro in the not too distant future. "I do want to turn pro," the 38-year-old Leddy continued. "My coaches advised against it because (at that time) I was at the top of Olympic consideration. And I enjoyed the benefits of being an amateur boxer, traveling around the world, but then I suffered a major knee injury that kept me out of action for six months. Boxing isn't an easy game, but turning pro is something I will do. Competing in national events is probably harder because you need to weigh in everyday and you're cultivated as a star."

Coombs and Leddy are indebted to amateur boxing in general, Russo and the Portland Boxing Club in particular.

"Walking into the Portland Boxing Club was diversity at its best for the state of Maine," Coombs concluded. "I met so many people there and they all had their own story to tell, often checkered pasts and strangely different than that of mine. I learned how to be more accepting and compassionate, and although so many of the boxers I worked alongside of were very different than me, we all had something in common - we wanted to be the best in the sport of boxing. These people became my family, and although boxing is an individual sport, we worked together to be the best boxer and most importantly, the best human

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"Mostly, I appreciate the opportunities that were afforded to me because of the generosity of my coach, Bobby Russo, and the rest of the Portland Boxing Club, Russo was a pivotal advocate, supporting the women's amateur boxing program. His first female athlete, Liz Leddy, blazed the way for us as the first competitive female representing the Portland Boxing Club. Russo is a highly respected coach and he's run a top-notch, no-nonsense club for 27 years. It was an honor to have him by my side all those years. I'll be forever grateful and credit the Portland Boxing Club for the person I am today."

Lisa couldn't be more different than Liz, who credits amateur boxing for saving her life, and the Portland Boxing Club in particular, for allowing her to become the person she is today.

"The Portland Boxing Club gave me a life raft and I'm so lucky to have met those people," Liz commented. "Boxing is full of paradoxes. Boxing gave me a safe place and it saved my life. I haven't had a drink since 2008. After my first meeting there, I found there was new hope for me in boxing. I saw a guy wearing a Portland Boxing Club hat, went to the gym, and joined. I did need to overcome some relapses, though. The Portland Boxing Club helps me every day. It paid for me to go to cosmopolitan school. Amateur boxing gave me all the travel I dreamed of. It's given me a good life: roof over my head and a career. I've made amends to the city I was destroying and I'm giving back to kids by coaching and speaking at schools. Boxing is like life. We continue as warriors because you don't graduate in boxing.

"Lisa is an amazing person. We've been friends since I came back. I took two years off, started drinking again, but I had a sense of loss. Goal setting has always been huge for me as a boxer and I've always felt like I've been catching up. Lisa and I are bonded like family, she's helped me so much. We traveled together to my fist national tournament and I won a silver medal. We've become really good friends and have similar morals and values. It was hard seeing her win a gold medal when I wasn't, but that pushed me to change to attain what I wanted in life. Lisa helped me mature."

Coombs has retired as a boxer. Liz plans to turn pro. Together their influence in women's boxing will grow, despite their contrasting backgrounds, inspiring a new generation of female boxers in America.

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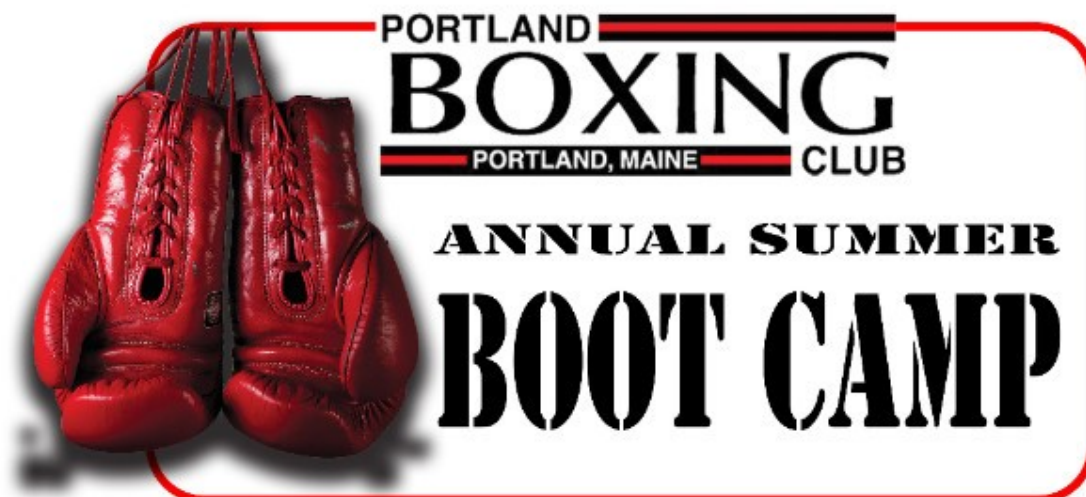
Champion Punch

### Champion Punch - Jorge Luis Abiague

Lauro Minaya, a student at the Maine College of Art's Salt Institute of Documentary Studies, originally from Lima, Peru, recently made a documentary about Portland Boxing Club's former professional flyweight boxer Jorge Luis Abiague. This documentary was Minaya's final project to complete his graduate program.

"I chose Jorge as a subject because my work is focused on the Latin American community of the United States. I moved to the United States from Spain and started a new life in New Jersey, which is known for its large Hispanic community." Minaya continues, "One year later, I came to Portland to study at the Maine College of Art, and I immediately noticed the low number of Latinos here. The contrast in terms of diversity between the two states called my attention, and I decided to focus my documentary work on my community."

Minaya was introduced to Abiague by a retired Cuban boxer named Valentino. Minaya's grandfather was a boxer in his early years, and he grew up with a fascination for the boxers and their fights. Abiague agreed to be the subject for Minaya's documentary. Minaya states, "I am really thankful to him and his family for all the support they gave me during the shooting days."

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## Summer Boot Camp

Portland Boxing Club's annual Summer Boot Camp will be held on Tuesday and Thursday evenings at 6:00 pm and Saturday mornings at 9:00 am starting Saturday August 3, 2019 through Thursday August 29, 2019. The cost is \$100 for 12 sessions. This boot camp is designed for people interested in becoming a member of the Portland Boxing Club or for anyone who just wants to get in shape.

To sign up for the Summer Boot Camp, email [pbcboxing@maine.rr.com](mailto:pbcboxing@maine.rr.com). Completing the boot camp will allow you to become a member of the Portland Boxing Club. The \$75 membership initiation fee is waived for Summer Boot Camp participants who join Portland Boxing Club in September. For more information on membership, see <https://portlandboxingclub.org/membership/>.

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 27 YEARS

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## Upcoming Events

### Third Annual Networking Fundraising Event

Macpage/Wipfli will again be sponsoring a Networking Fundraising Event at the Portland Boxing Club at 5:30 pm on Tuesday, September 24, 2019. \$100 donation per person or six people for a \$500 donation. Hors d'oeuvres and drink vouchers are included with your donation. This event is limited to 150 people to allow for effective business networking and giving all attendees the opportunity interact with members of the Portland Boxing Club team. To reserve your spot or for more information, contact Durward Ferland at (207) 615-8049 or [durward.ferland@wipfli.com](mailto:durward.ferland@wipfli.com).

### All-Star Boxing at the Portland Expo

The Portland Boxing Club will be staging its 105th event in Portland since the

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Boxing event will be held November 9, 2019 at the Portland Expo, 239 Park Ave, Portland.

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### Boxing Collectables and Memorabilia

Portland Boxing Club now has boxing collectables and memorabilia available for sale on-line. Current items listed include autographed boxing gloves from famous boxers such as Micky Ward, Dicky Eklund, Muhammad Ali, Jake LaMotta and Gerry Cooney along with local favorites such as Liz Leddy and Russell Lamour. Other items include vintage boxing magazines such as The Ring, KO Magazine, Boxing Illustrated and World Boxing from 1978 to 1992. Keep checking back as additional items are being added regularly.

Donations of boxing collectables and memorabilia are being accepted if you have items that you would like to contribute. "We have heard from people who want to make sure their collection goes to a good cause and from people who have been collecting for years and don't know what to do with their items. We will photograph them, research their value and offer them for sale to help PBC raise money," states Portland Boxing Club's President and Head Coach Bob



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The Boxing Collectables and Memorabilia page can be seen at [www.portlandboxingclub.org/memorabilia](http://www.portlandboxingclub.org/memorabilia)



### [PBC On-Line Store](#)

Portland Boxing Club's on-line store has a wide selection of merchandise featuring the Portland Boxing Club logo. These make great gifts for the hard-to-buy-for boxer or boxing fan in your life!

### **Summer Sale**

Sun's out, gun's out! Performance tank tops are on sale for \$19.

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### Help Support the Portland Boxing Club

Join the Red Corner Club! It is a great way to show your boxing pride and support the Portland Boxing Club. For an annual tax deductible donation of \$100 or greater, you can join this exclusive club of Portland Boxing Club supporters. The Red Corner Club is open to anyone who wants to support the Portland Boxing Club, including current and past members, boxing team alumni, fans and community supporters.

Benefits include: Portland Boxing Club Shirt with the Red Corner Club member logo, Recognition in Upcoming Souvenir Programs, Recognition in Portland Boxing Club Newsletters and Recognition at Portland Boxing Club Events.

Memberships can also be given as a gift! [Click here for more information and to join the Red Corner Club](#)

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and Portland Boxing Club will receive a portion of the purchase price.

## Membership

If you haven't been into the Portland Boxing Club recently, we welcome you to rejoin! If you are an active member, refer your friends! Membership information and Saturday boot camp information is available on our website.

[Membership Information](#)

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**WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

<b>MONDAY - FRIDAY</b>	<b>OPEN GYM</b> 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM
<b>FRIDAY</b>	<b>STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING</b> 5:30 PM
<b>SATURDAY</b>	<b>OPEN GYM</b> 12:00 PM - 3:00 PM
<b>SATURDAY</b>	<b>DROP IN CLASS</b> 2:00 PM \$10.00

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Turf Doctor

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