

Military World Boxing Championships coming to Lejeune Ten-day event in October to attract 20 to 30 countries

By **RICK SCOPPE** Sports Editor
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If you like boxing, you'll want to head to Camp Lejeune in October for the 53rd Military World Boxing Championship.

The event, put on by the Conseil International du Sport Militaire (CISM), will feature 20 to 30 countries and between 100 to 150 boxers vying for gold medals — not to mention silver and bronze — while looking to prepare for the 2012 Olympics.

"It's absolutely superb fighting," Jim Hunt, president of the CISM boxing committee and commandant of the Irish Defense Forces, said Tuesday at a news conference aboard Camp Lejeune. "It's what you see at the Olympics on television that people watch all the time."

The competition, which will be held at Goettge Field House, will feature three 3-minute rounds in 10 weight classes, ranging from 46 to 49 kilograms (101 to 107 pounds) to heavyweight. Admission is free.

Preliminary bouts will begin either Oct. 10 or 11, depending on the number of boxers, with the quarterfinals Oct. 13 and semifinals Oct. 14. The finals are Oct. 16, with the day before a "cultural day," Hunt said. That will include a trip to Coastal Plains Raceway Park for drag racing as well as some paintball competition.

"The quarterfinals and semifinals, that will be the really tough, tough bouts," Hunt said, "really good boxing."

The festivities get under way, however, Oct. 10 with an Olympic-style opening ceremony at 3 p.m. Liversedge Field aboard base that will include all the boxers in their military uniforms along with speakers and military as well as possibly high school bands performing.

"It's something to see," said Jim McKay, project officer for the championship.

It was something of a coup for Camp Lejeune to land the event. The last time the base had an event run by CISM, which with 133 countries is the largest military organization in the world, was the 1998 military wrestling championships.

"This event is a world championship," said Steven Dinote, who is athletic director for the Marine Corps. "You're going to see a lot of Olympians or future Olympians or future Olympians at this event."

"The scope of that I don't think is fully realized. Yes, it is a military championship. But in many nations the military athletes are the national team members in various sports."

And while the United States team will have the benefit of the home crowd, the Americans won't have an advantage inside the ropes, Dinote said.

"The crowd definitely will come into play. But it's not like some other sports where the referees are local. We're bringing in international referees from around the world. The referees that are going to be judging the bout might not be American most of the time," he said.

Under the Olympic-style scoring system, three of the five referees must agree a punch is "legal" for it to count for a point, Dinote said.

“So the home-field advantage is out the door because it’s an objective system not subjective,” he said. “It’s not like professional boxing where it’s an opinion who won the round.”

Still, the Americans do have at least one other advantage outside the ring.

“They have a little bit more of an opportunity to train and not travel as much,” Dinote said. “They get to train here at Lejeune (beginning Sept. 23) before the competition starts. So there is a little bit of an advantage where they’re not going to have the jet lag and recovery time.

“They’re representing United States in front of the home crowd. So for them it’s a little bit of a boost.”

The championship wasn’t held last year because host country Turkey backed out at the last minute, Hunt said. Two years ago host Azerbaijan won the championship and will again be among the favorites along with the Russians and former Soviet states.

And the U.S. team?

“The United States will definitely have a tough road ahead in all the weight categories to win a medal,” said Suba Saty, secretariat of Armed Forces Sports. “Three years ago in India in the world games we won three medals. So that’s really good for the United States.”

At this point, it’s hard to pinpoint how many countries, and which boxers, will actually compete in the championship, according to Hunt, who said that nonetheless the bouts will be both entertaining and fierce because of the boxers are looking ahead to the Olympics.

“We don’t know who’s going to be here this year. It could be the young guys who are getting ready for (the Olympics in) 2012 in London. More than likely it will be. So you’ll have some familiar names and a lot of new people,” Hunt said.

“Every competition now, be it civilian or military is all going towards 2012 in London. That’s the end for every amateur boxer.”



Rick Scope/The Daily News Steven Dinote, athletic director for the Marine Corps, talks to reporters about the 53rd Military World Boxing Championships coming to Camp Lejeune in October during a news conference on Tuesday aboard the base.