

Boxing Never Left Gallup

Written by Story and Photos by Tom Hartsock Sun Correspondent
Friday, 12 June 2015 14:15



OK, I admit there was an error in a previous column when I announced that boxing had returned to Gallup. It turns out it never left, it just didn't generate much publicity.

The Gallup Police Athletic League has been training and working with young boxers, from age six to the young 20s, for a number of years. Located in the old jail behind the Gallup Police Department, the gym has been furnished with a boxing ring and several sets of equipment to help in the training.

Coached by Chuck Padilla, a former boxer who won Golden Gloves twice as a teenager - back-to-back as a 15 and 16-year-old – and Frank “Pancho” Diaz, GPAL accepts both boys and girls in a very informal manner. Padilla fought in the ring from ages 10-17.

“On some evenings we have 20-25 show up, other nights just a handful,” Padilla said. “All they have to do is sign in and start working out.”

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Pancho is a former Army veteran who has spent about two and a half years helping the youngsters to train. His previous experience included about eight years with fighters like Larry Estrada and George Lujan.

Padilla is also a veteran, of the Navy, and has been with GPAL as an unpaid volunteer since the club opened under former coach Jimmy Montano, forced into giving up this discipline because of medical reasons. Montano is currently the head coach of the Miyamura Patriots softball team.

“It keeps these kids off the street, and out of trouble,” Padilla said.

Padilla also informed The Gallup Sun that two of his fighters, nine-year-old Saleem Gilchrist and 10-year-old Elijah Gilchrist, will be fighting in Farmington this Saturday in an scheduled event. Neither was available Monday for an interview as their mother was out of town on vacation and had planned to take her sons to the meet before returning home.

Other local fighters have participated in matches around the state over the last few years.

GPAL is open Monday through Thursday at 5:30 pm for more information or for training. To get there, enter the GPD south entrance and drive around to the east side of the parking lot. A high chain link fence has an opening to walk through to get to the only door in the building. Do not park in the lot as it is reserved for vehicles belonging to GPD.

Get fit, get your kids involved, and we'll see you in the bleachers!