



**BLARNEY ALERT!**

**BOB ARUM AND DON KING RESUME RIVALRY  
WITH ST. PATRICK'S DAY BOXING SPECTACULAR!**

**JOSE RAMÍREZ VS. AMIR IMAM  
FOR THE WBC SUPER LIGHTWEIGHT WORLD TITLE  
AND  
OLEKSANDR GVOZDYK VS. MEHDI AMAR  
FOR THE INTERIM WBC LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT WORLD TITLE  
PLUS,  
THE RETURN OF  
IRISH OLYMPIC HERO MICHAEL CONLAN**

**Saturday, March 17, at the "O'Mecca of Boxing,"  
The Theater at Madison Square Garden  
Live on ESPN, ESPN Deportes, and the ESPN App**

**Tickets Go on Sale Tomorrow!  
Thursday, Feb. 8, at Noon EST**

**NEW YORK (February 7, 2018)** -- Hall of Fame promoters **Bob Arum** and **Don King** will resume one of boxing's fiercest rivalries when the fighters they respectively guide -- top-rated contenders **JOSE RAMÍREZ** and **AMIR "Young Man" IMAM** -- collide for the vacant **World Boxing Council (WBC)** Super Lightweight world title.

Ramirez vs. Imam will headline a spectacular **St. Patrick's Day** world title extravaganza, Saturday, **March 17**, at the "O'Mecca of Boxing," The Theater at **Madison Square Garden**. The Ramirez - Imam world championship event will be

televised live and exclusively at 8 p.m. ET on **ESPN, and ESPN Deportes** and stream live on the **ESPN App** at 5:30 p.m. ET.

Promoted by **Top Rank®**, and **Don King Productions**, in association with Madison Square Garden. Tickets to the Ramirez-Imam world championship event will go on sale tomorrow, Thursday, February 8, at Noon EST. Tickets priced at \$206, \$156, \$106, \$81, \$56 and \$31, can be purchased at the Madison Square Garden Box Office, all Ticketmaster outlets, Ticketmaster charge by phone ([866-858-0008](tel:866-858-0008)), and online at [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com) and [www.MSG.com](http://www.MSG.com).

Ramirez, (21-0, 16 KOs), from Avenal, Calif., an amateur standout and a 2012 U.S. Olympian, is known as much for what he does outside the ring as he does inside the ring. In both instances, he is a fierce fighter. Inside the ring, Jose has stopped 76% of the opponents he has faced, including previously undefeated Top-10 contender MIKE "Yes Indeed" REED, who needed to be rescued in the second round by the referee on November 11. It was the fourth consecutive knockout victory for Ramirez and the eighth in his last ten bouts. Outside the ring, Ramirez has been a tireless advocate for farmers of the Central Valley in California, known as the breadbasket of the U.S. Ramirez, a child of pickers and who spent many summers doing the same 10-hour shifts under the blazing sun, has been fighting for the farmers' water rights for years. With many of his Fight For Water boxing events in the Fresno area benefitting the California Latino Water Coalition, it's no wonder Ramirez, world-rated No. 3 by the WBC, has consistently broken his own boxing attendance records in the area's most prominent Arenas.

"I'm honored for the opportunity to be able to fight for a world title. Since I was only eight years old, with a few amateur victories under my belt, I started dreaming of becoming a world champion. To have that green and gold belt like all the best fighters in history have. I'm living my dream," said Ramirez. "I'm ready to work as hard as it takes, to overcome any obstacle and adversity that comes my way. I've sacrificed, worked, and challenged myself in a way most can't imagine. Physically and mentally I'll be more than ready come March 17th. I started drawing this picture 17 years ago, and I almost have it completed."

Imam, (21-1, 18 KOs), who is a proud New Yorker, also comes from a strong amateur background. And like Ramirez rarely leaves a fight's result in the hands of the judges. Imam boasts a victory by knockout ratio of 86%, including his last three and five of his previous seven. Imam said it best when it comes to his impressive number of stoppage victories, "I take care of business because you don't get paid extra for overtime." Known for his superior boxing skills and movement and excellent punching power, Imam enters this fight world-rated No. 1 by the WBC.

"I'll have a really good opponent in front of me, and it's going to be a good fight," said Imam. "Fighting at Madison Square Garden, where I come from is a big thing, and it is a dream come true. I'm looking forward to it, and I'm working hard. I was ringside in Fresno for Jose's last fight, so I know what he brings to the table. I know what I've got to do to win this belt. This fight will be a clash of two fighters with a lot of knockouts, and it will come down to who can stand up to that leather. If he does come straight forward, I will box and break him down and stop him. I'm not going to call for a knockout, but if it comes within itself, I am going to take advantage of it. Either way, I will leave that ring with the W."

"Jose has worked hard to earn his world title shot and I know he and trainer Freddie Roach will come out blazing and give the fans at The Garden and those watching on all the ESPN platforms a night they will remember," said Arum. "Jose has been a longtime advocate of the Central Valley farmers, fighting for their water rights. On March 17, I am confident he will become their first world champion boxer. The card will also feature the return of Michael Conlan. In just 12 months, he has made St. Patrick's Day his date and The Garden his second home. I am confident that he will become one of its biggest box office attractions. This world championship event will feature exciting fights from top to bottom which I look forward to announcing soon."

The fight between Ramirez and Imam will mark the first time Arum and King have battled each other promotionally on the same card since Miguel Cotto defended his World Boxing Association (WBA) Super Welterweight world title on March 12, 2011, stopping former world champion Ricardo Mayorga in the 12th-round.

"This is going to be a great fight. A fantastic fight and I know Amir is training hard to come in at his best because he wants that belt," said King.

"Jose was so pumped up in his last fight when he destroyed unbeaten Mike Reed, a legitimate Top-10 contender," said World-Famous Freddie Roach, Ramirez's trainer. "He knew this title shot was at stake and he destroyed Reed. He will be ready to give it his all on March 17. What could be better than to win the WBC's green belt on St. Patrick's Day by driving Imam out of The Garden?"

"This is it, Madison Square Garden, the main event, ESPN's flagship network in prime time for that coveted green belt. It's Jose's time to show the world a real star has arrived as the complete package, and that is something boxing has needed for a long time. "Jose has worked a lifetime to show everyone what I already know. The curtain rises on the Jose Ramirez Show on March 17th," said Ramirez's manager, Rick Mirigian.

"This is a big fight, a serious fight and we are going to be ready," said Stacey McKinley, Imam's head trainer, and manager. "We know what we are up against, Jose Ramirez is an Olympian, an undefeated fighter and he has a big following. He's tall, he's quick, and he throws a lot of punches. We certainly are not taking him lightly. His last fight against Michael Reed, Jose bombed him out like he bombed out the rest of them out. But Johnny Garcia fought Ramirez tough and went the distance. Amir carried Garcia until the fourth round just to get some work in."

The world championship card will also feature a battle for the Interim WBC Light Heavyweight title between unbeaten Ukrainian contender **OLEKSANDR 'The Nail' GVOZDYK** and French top-rated contender **MEHDI AMAR**.

Gvozdyk (14-0, 12 KOs), a former Olympic medalist from Kharkiv, Ukraine, enters this fight having won 12 of his last 14 matches by knockout, including all four of his NABF light heavyweight title fights. Gvozdyk is riding an eight-bout knockout-winning streak.

"I can explode with excitement with how happy I am right now. Seeing a bright light at the end of the tunnel, means I'm getting one a step closer to a world title shot, said Gvozdyk. "Fighting for the Interim title and mandatory spot will put me in position to challenge whoever the champion will be at that time. I would like to thank the WBC for giving me this opportunity, my promoter Top Rank, my manager Egis Klimas, all my team that has worked hard to get me to this position. I want to give special thanks to ESPN who will feature my fight and my performance in front of a massive audience. My dream is slowly coming through; I'm also excited to fight in Madison Square Garden, New York, The Mecca of Boxing. As far as my opponent, I don't know much about him, but I'm ready to find out on March 17th."

"I'm very happy for Oleksandr because he is getting this WBC interim world title opportunity," said Gvozdyk's manager, Egis Klimas. "He is a step closer to be the mandatory challenger and to get in position to become a world champion in his next fight after March 17th. He is a hardworking and smart boxer, and he very well deserves to be where he is now."

Amar (34-5-2, 16 KO's) from Marseille, France, will make his United States debut when he battles Gvozdyk for the Interim WBC Heavyweight title. His fight against Gvozdyk will be his third outside of his native France.

The event will also mark the 2018 debut of Irish Olympic hero and The Garden's fistic fan favorite **MICHAEL "MICK" CONLAN** in a six-round featherweight bout. Conlan (5-0, 4 KOs), of Belfast, made his pro debut on St. Patrick's Day 2017, headlining and selling out The Theater at Madison Square Garden. On that historic night, Conlan was escorted into the ring by fellow countryman and UFC superstar Conor McGregor. The night was both memorable and exciting.

Conlan (5-0, 4 KO's), from Belfast, Ireland, begins his sophomore professional year exactly where he started his freshman year -- at The Garden. Conlan has steadily improved throughout his short professional tenure. His popularity has carried over to every city he has fought. A former amateur standout who was a 2012 Olympic Bronze medalist and 2015 World Amateur Champion -- a first for a male Irish fighter. Conlan, who regularly sparred over the past year with world champion fighters Oscar Valdez and Jessie Magdaleno, now trains in the United Kingdom with Adam Booth.

"I'm looking forward to another fantastic night of boxing in The Theatre at Madison Square Garden! It will be exactly one year to the day since my professional debut in the Mecca of Boxing. I'm excited and ready to put on a great show for my amazing fans," said Conlan. "I know, like last year, thousands are traveling over from Ireland to support me for which I'm hugely grateful. There is only one place to be on St. Patrick's Day this year, and that is The Garden, and if you cannot make it, be sure to catch it live on ESPN or any of its platforms!"

For more information visit: [www.toprank.com](http://www.toprank.com), [www.espn.com/boxing](http://www.espn.com/boxing); Facebook: [facebook.com/trboxing](https://facebook.com/trboxing), [facebook.com/trboxeo](https://facebook.com/trboxeo), [facebook.com/espndeportes](https://facebook.com/espndeportes);

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