

Friday night's alright for fighting

The stars of a charity fight night are not hard-bitten boxers but businessmen and home-makers – and they won't be pulling any punches, says **Michael Franco**

The banker wants to give the editor a serious smack-down. The business conglomerate manager is eager to maul the money broker. Even the home-maker mum can't wait to throw down with another woman.

No, they're not actors in *Fight Club II* or characters in the latest townsfolk-gone-crazy Stephen King novel. They're contestants in the third White Collar Boxing Charity Night – raising money for two organisations that benefit children in need. And on 9 May at the Orchard Hotel, they're all out to pulverise each other in the ring in front of 600 of their closest friends, family members and co-workers. While most participants may be white-collar desk-jockey pros, when it comes to boxing, they are all absolute amateurs who have just 12 weeks to get into shape. Training sessions are held three times a week and last about an hour each, during which the boxers-to-be hardly stop moving. A timer in the gym prods them from one high-octane drill to the next.

Oliver Gilbert (the money broker) describes the weekly exercise regimen as invigorating but surprisingly hard. 'Your whole body gets drained of every ounce of energy,' he says about his first sparring match. Bryan Baker (the business conglomerate manager) echoes his sentiments. 'Just keeping your hands up for two minutes is hard enough,' he says.

On the bright-lights big-money night, 16 will compete – paired according to weight class – so once the fisticuffs are finished, eight victors bask in glory and eight show up to work with bruises to the body and ego. The night's action follows Olympic boxing rules and bouts consist of three two-minute rounds. The gloves the competitors use are 16oz versions instead of the 10oz mitts used in official amateur boxing matches, which helps slow their punches. A little.

Judging from the success of previous White Collar Boxing nights, people like paying big money to charities as long as they get to see their husbands, wives and buddies rough each other up. In fact, Baker had so much fun in the audience last year, he decided to join in the fray this time around. 'Great food, great drinks and getting to see your buddies compete,' he says of the perks. 'It's one of the greatest nights out.' Ian Mullane, who donates his coaching services and Vanda Boxing Club facility free of charge to event participants, adds: 'Everyone in the audience has an emotional connection to at least one of the competitors.'

But watching the event from a cushy chair, dressed in black tie and nibbling 'great food and drink' is a world away from actually entering the ring. That's



Fists of fury Hard-hitting blokes at Vanda Boxing Club show those bags who's boss

The editor's motivation for entering the ring? 'I tend to pick sports I can die in,' he says

a step competitors like Jim Plouffe, the 39-year-old editor-in-chief of *Reader's Digest Asia*, is ready to take. After attending the first White Collar Boxing Night, Plouffe figured he would never

sign up. But as his fitness goals changed, he jumped in when a spot became available. 'I've probably lost three kilos and will hopefully lose even more,' he says of his training. 'I just feel much fitter. And I now know how to skip rope, which is good when you have three daughters. They're all impressed. I can actually do tricks.' His other motivation for entering the ring? 'I tend to pick sports I can die in,' he says. He's only half-joking.

Rachael Marshall (the mother, one of two female competitors), also says her

four-year-old daughter has really enjoyed her mum's training – even occasionally accompanying her to the gym. 'At first it was hard,' Marshall says of the workout. 'I never had a pair of boxing gloves on before in my life. In fact, before you can even put the gloves on, you have to get things like balance and foot placement correct.' Now, as she slugs the heavy bags with some real heavy-hitters, she looks focused, toned and every bit as tough as the brawnier male trainees.

Mullane – a former software company chief operating officer, now boxing coach, gym owner and promoter – vouches for the transforming effects the event has on the participants. 'It will change their lives,' he says. 'It's the most intense six minutes they'll ever experience... the arena will be filled with adrenalin, alcohol and a whole host of emotions.' But he has no doubt that his freshmen fighters will be ready for the big event. 'They'll do superhuman things that night, things they never thought possible,' he says.

Some of those things include improving the quality of life for children who live and play among waste dumps in Cambodia, or helping to provide specialised vocational training and education to children with cerebral palsy – work conducted by the Sporting Chance Foundation and the Spastic Children's Association of Singapore, respectively. They're the organisations – and the true heavyweight champs – that will benefit from the evening's proceeds. *The White Collar Boxing Charity Night takes place at Orchard Hotel at 8pm on 9 May. The event is sold out.*

Fight clubs

Looking to get in fighting form? Training to box – whether or not you ever face an opponent – is one of the best workouts for overall fitness. Get started with:

Combat Academy The name of this centre says it all – train in martial-art forms from around the world, including Brazilian jiu-jitsu, Israeli krav maga and good ol' boxing classes. Various prices and times. **Evershine & Century Complex, 43 Beach Rd (9475 9012, www.combatacademy.com.sg). MRT: Lavender, then bus 57, 100, 107.**

Les Mills BodyCombat Kiwi Les Mills built this family fitness franchise after his stint as an Olympic boxer in the 1960s and '70s.

His BodyCombat classes, taught at gyms around the world, combine moves from karate, boxing, tae kwon do, tai chi and muay thai. Various prices, times and locations. Fitness First (www.fitnessfirst.com.sg), Planet Fitness (www.planetfitness.com.sg).

Vanda Boxing Club You'll learn balance and hand-eye co-ordination as you go through the rapid-fire hour-long workout of skipping rope, shadow boxing, bag work and non-contact sparring. Hit the heavy bags, speed bag and target gloves until the trainer says you're ready for contact sparring. \$125 (month). **Turf City, 200 Turf Club Rd (6767 1182, www.vandaboxing.com.sg). MRT: Clementi, then free Turf City shuttle bus every 30 minutes. MF**



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Events

How to use the listings

Listings are divided into three sections: Things to watch, Things to do and Things to plan for are listed by sport; **FREE** All venues and exhibitions are free unless otherwise indicated.

How to be listed

Listings must arrive by the **Monday five weeks** before publication. We need the following details: address, phone number, nearest MRT, dates, times and prices. Listings can be sent by post or emailed to listings@timeoutsingapore.com. Listings are free but, as space is limited, inclusion is not guaranteed.

Things to watch

Badminton

FREE Asian Satellite Badminton Championships 20 & 22 May; 9am, 23 & 24 May; 2pm. Yio Chu Kang Sports Hall, 200 Ang Mo Kio Ave 9 (www.singaporebadminton.org.sg). **Yio Chu Kang** You might know badminton as a gentle game played at family gatherings, but it's actually an Olympic event and the fastest racket sport in the world with bashed birdies reaching speeds of up to 320km/h. Come watch these athletes from countries across Asia spanking their shuttlecocks.

Basketball

NBA Basketball Playoffs 3, 7, 10, 14, 17 May. Live on ESPN (www.espnstar.com). The New Orleans Hornets, San Antonio Spurs and LA Lakers are all sharing the same Western Conference wave heading into post-season action. Whichever team makes it to the finals, our money's on the Boston Celtics coming out as the top team from the east. Should be a good month of basketball.

Football

UEFA Champions League 1, 22 May. Moscow. Live on ESPN (www.espnstar.com). Manchester United will battle Barcelona and Liverpool will take on Chelsea in the semis to see who gets to play in front of more than 100,000 fans at the Luzhniki Stadium in Moscow for one of football's biggest titles.

Horse racing

Singapore International Racing Festival 18 May; 3.30pm. \$3-\$7; special packages \$75-\$95. Singapore Turf Club, 1 Turf Club Ave (6879 1000, www.siacup.com.sg). **Kranji.** The Singapore Turf Club's annual highlight features two world-class races – the Singapore Airlines International Cup (\$3 million purse) and the KrisFlyer International Sprint (\$1 million purse). Even if you don't pick a winner, betting options start as low as \$2 a race, so it doesn't break the bank. Cheap eats and beers are also available in between the action. Races are also held on 2, 4, 9, 17, 23, 31 May.

Motorsports

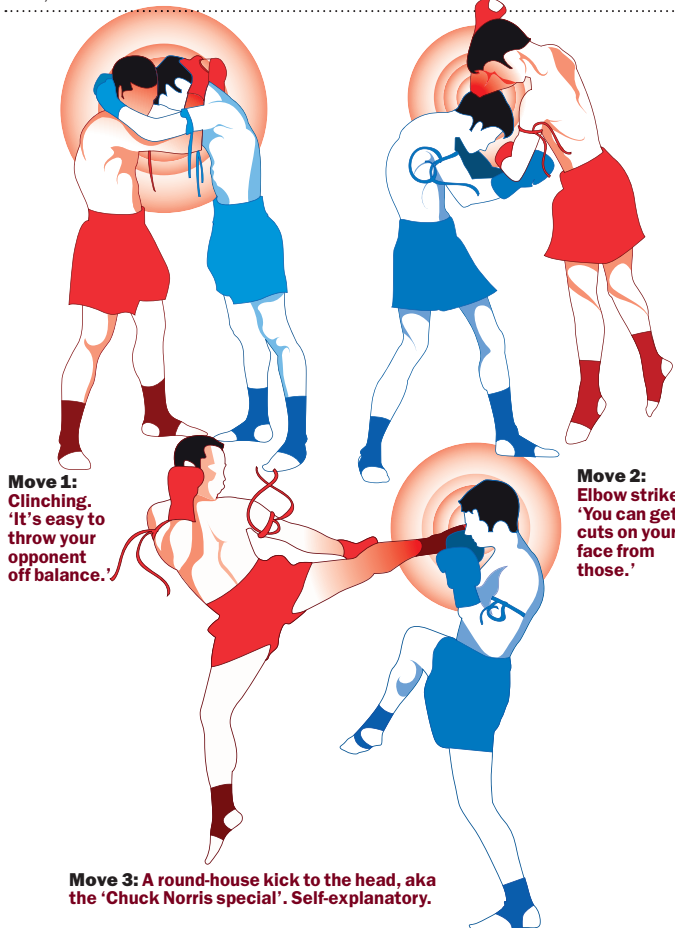
Formula 1 Grand Prix de Monaco 25 May; time TBA. Monaco. Live on STAR Sports (www.espnstar.com). One of the most expensive sports in the world comes to one of the wealthiest places on Earth. Luckily, you can join the jet-set through the TV; you save a bundle and see even more of the race than they will. No Prada required.

Netball

FREE NSL Finals 17 May; 5.30pm. Toa Payoh Sports Hall, 297A Lorong 6 Toa Payoh (www.netball.org.sg). **Toa Payoh.** In 1895, women's basketball uniforms didn't allow them the freedom to do things like dribble

Muay oh muay

Alexis Ong talks strategy with *Contender Asia* muay thai fighter Kim Khan Zaki, aka Zach



Move 1: Clinching. 'It's easy to throw your opponent off balance.'

Move 2: Elbow strike. 'You can get cuts on your face from those.'

Move 3: A round-house kick to the head, aka the 'Chuck Norris special'. Self-explanatory.

and run. Thus the sport of netball was invented (we're not kidding). Fast-forward more than 100 years and netball is the most rapidly growing women's sport in Singapore. Come find out why, and support our local ballers (who now have much smarter uniforms) as Singapore's own Netball Super League wraps up its season.

Running

FREE Sundown Ultra-Marathon 31 May; 8pm (ultra), 11.59pm (marathon). Changi Coastal Rd (www.sundownmarathon.com). The competitors in this race are going to strain their endurance levels to complete this double marathon, pounding the pavement for more than 84km. The least you can do is strain your vocal chords cheering them on. This intense after-midnight race starts and ends at Changi Point along Nicoll Drive at Car Park 1.

Things to do

Cycling

Punggol Criterium 11 May; 6.30am. \$35; children \$15. Punggol Way (www.cycling.org.sg). **Punggol.** Tight, fast and hard. No, we're not talking about the body type you need to participate in a 'crit' race. We're referring to how hard you need to ride in a tight group at fast speeds to do well. Competitors will ride outdoors around a 4km loop for 25, 30, 60 or 90 minutes (depending on class) while trying not to be disqualified by getting lapped. As time runs out, a horn sounds at which point the pack breaks into a sprint of one to three laps. Whoever crosses the finish line first

at the end of the sprints wins. Registration ends on 8 May at 5pm.

Fencing

The Academy of Fencing \$40 single class; \$320 ten-class pack. Turf City, 200 Turf Club Rd (6465 5810, www.academyoffencing.com). **Clementi, then free Turf City shuttle bus every 30 minutes.** Where else in Singapore could you assail someone with a sabre and not get in trouble for it? Besides, with words like *thrust, beat, lunge and touch* used to describe various aspects of the sport, how can you not give fencing a try? Classes are available for adults and children at all levels.

Golf

Queens Golf Range Daily 7am-11pm. 60 Jalan Penjara, off Margaret Dr (6471 0555, www.golfers.com.sg). **Queenstown.** Sometimes whacking a few balls is the only real way to blow off steam after a particularly tough day (or week) at the office. Fortunately, this modern, well-equipped range will provide you with a bucket of balls, a club and a field of green where you can whack until you're spent. Speaking of spending, balls cost only \$0.06 each during peak hours – a small price to pay to become a true sultan of swing.

Inline skating

Skateline Open Classes 3, 4, 10, 11, 17, 18, 24, 25, 31 May; varying times. \$25; four classes for \$89. Bishan Park/East Coast Park (www.skateline.com.sg). Instead of getting lapped by all those cool-looking, easy-gliding skaters in the park this weekend, why not take the first step to becoming a big-league blader yourself? Skateline offers classes at both parks all

weekend; equipment is provided so you don't need to bring anything but your wallet (it doubles as good padding).

Skiing and snowboarding

Snowline at Snow City. 21 Jurong Town Hall Rd, Snow City Building (6425 0801, www.snowcity.com.sg). **Jurong East.** We can't imagine serious skiers and boarders spending a lot of time at Snow City (the slope is only 60m long and three storeys high), but it's perfect for beginners. Instruction is offered by Snowline, an on-site independent company; lessons start at \$55 for a one-hour session (equipment inclusive).

Ultimate Frisbee

FREE Singapore Ultimate Tue-Thu; 6pm. Various locations (www.singaporeultimate.com). Ultimate Frisbee is nearly 40 years old and combines elements of football and basketball with the easy-going spirit of the flying disc. So what are you waiting for, a personal invitation? Then consider this yours. Singapore Ultimate hosts free pick-up games throughout the week open to all levels of competitors. Quench the thirst you're sure to work up with the other disc jockeys at Brewwerkz when the action's over on Tuesday nights.

Things to plan for

Running

Lion City Marathon 29 Jun; 4am or 6am. Price TBA. Bugis Junction. (www.lioncitymarathon.com). **Bugis.** What makes the inaugural Lion City Marathon stand out is that it's open to inline skaters and athletes with disabilities as well as all runners. The race course will take athletes to the south, west and north of the island before finishing back at Bugis Junction. An ultra distance is offered along with a half-marathon and a team marathon event, as well as a race for kids.

Laguna Phuket International

Marathon 15 Jun; \$75. Laguna Phuket Resort, Phuket, Thailand (www.phuketmarathon.com). Just when you were looking for an excuse to go to Phuket, along comes the perfect reason. The organisers have teamed up with Hope Worldwide to turn your run into a charitable activity. They're even offering a half-marathon, 10.5km run and 5km walk for those who'd rather drink than run.

Triathlon

Tribob Sprint Series 15 Jun; 8.30am. \$80. Changi Beach Park (www.singaporeprintseries.com). **Simet then bus 9.** Not quite ready to participate in a full-length triathlon just yet? Then this final event in the first-ever Tribob Singapore Sprint Series is just the way to ease into all of that pounding, pedalling and paddling. You'll do all the usual triathlon activities but at shorter lengths: the swim is 750m, the bike ride is 20km and the run is 5km. Registration closes 5 June.

Tug of war

1st SAA Outdoor Tug of War Championships 5 & 6 Jul; 8am-5pm. \$20 per team. Bukit Gombak Stadium, 800 Bukit Batok West Ave 5 (www.singaporeathletics.org.sg). **Bukit Gombak.** Here's your chance to yank someone else's rope for a change. Tug of war might seem more like a picnic game than a proper sport, but there's actually an International Federation governing all that pulling and grunting. With this event, SAA brings it to Singapore for the city's first official competition. Teams consist of eight pullers and competitions will be held in both youth and adult categories, so start roping in some mates to join in the fun.

Compiled by Michael Franco

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