



Pair trade leather in build-up to big fights

Boxing
By Nathan Crombie

A PAIR of elite Wairarapa fighters have been trading leather as sparring partners in Masterton.

Zane "Hybrid" Hopman, amateur world champion kickboxer and pro cruiserweight boxer, and Lance "Buster" Bryant, four-time amateur champion and pro cruiserweight boxer, have been sparring at the Masterton Young Citizens Hall ahead of prize fights in their own codes.

Bryant, 33, a shepherd in Pahiatua, has been confirmed for the televised Super8 cruiserweight showdown at Horncastle Arena in Christchurch on March 28 while Hopman is awaiting confirmation for the 86kg Australasian Cruiserweight King in the Ring last man standing contest at the ASB Stadium in Auckland on April 11.

Bryant is building up to his second shot in the Super8 series after a controversial split decision loss in the quarter-final to Vaitele Soi, who was the losing finalist, at the cruiserweight tournament in Auckland in November.

In Masterton last week veteran Masterton boxing coach

Neil Cadwallader was corner man for Bryant, who is training under Steven Wood out of the Bellevue Boxing Club in Wellington, and John Kamo, Fortitude Thai Boxing Gym boxing coach, was cornering for the 24-year-old Hopman.

Bryant and Hopman had twice last year burned through eight rounds of sparring at Meehan's Boxing Gym in Palmerston North ahead of the Pahiatua fighter's Super8 debut and on Friday in Masterton the pair nailed eight explosive sparring rounds which Hopman later described as a "golden training opportunity".

Hopman, whose sponsors include Kuripuni Sports Bar, Wai Weight Private Gym, CLM, Lone Star Masterton and Trev's Sports, said ring-time with an elite and experienced fighter like Bryant was vital to his training regime and tournament chances.

"Having the opportunity to get in the ring with him is invaluable."

Hopman, who took heavyweight kickboxing gold at the 2014 WMC IMFA World Championships in Malaysia, also made his televised debut last year in the King in the Ring series and went transtasman for his pro boxing debut at a Jupiters Hotel and Casino fight night in Queensland.



"Lance has so much experience and I'm only at the start of my professional career. Having the opportunity to get in the ring with him is invaluable."

Zane 'Hybrid' Hopman

ELITE: Lance Bryant (left), four-time national title holder and pro cruiserweight boxer, and world champ kickboxer and pro cruiserweight Zane Hopman, after an explosive sparring session at the Masterton Young Citizens Hal. PHOTO/NATHAN CROMBIE



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