

SPORTS BOARD

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THE LEN BIAS TRAGEDY

By JOHN E. JACOB

Len Bias was on the brink of unimagined worldly success — pro stardom and millions of dollars in salaries and product endorsements. And it was all blown away in moments by a mistaken fling with drugs.

But if his death inspires a war on the drug dealers and a reform of college athletics, it will not have been in vain. It may save countless young people from the self-destruction of drug abuse and enable countless others to

complete their educations.

The drug epidemic destroys millions of lives, but despite highly publicized drug busts and wars against drugs, the stuff keeps flooding across our borders and into our neighborhoods.

In city after city, decent people watch as their neighborhoods become havens of the dealers, who peddle their wares openly and entice young people to escape from often grim reality into the drug-induced haze of nothingness.

Everyone condemns this sleazy situation but if star athletes and molders of opinion use drugs for "recreational" purposes how will we ever contain the raging epidemic in the streets? Hopefully Len Bias' tragic death may help change the climate that tolerates drugs.

Black athletes have a special responsibility in this. Their white peers may be able to get away with dabbling in drugs, but they can't. Aside from the personal dangers, they are role models in the community, worshipped among young blacks as white athletes never are in their communities. So they have to stay clean and act clean, or they'll be implicitly responsible for further tragedies.

Another aspect of the Bias death is that it helped expose the exploitation of college

Kinchen Puts Middleweight Title Shot On Line At Sahara

James "The Heat" Kinchen, the top-ranked middleweight contender in the world and a slugger with a mandatory title shot against champion Marvelous Marvin Hagler looming, puts it all on the line against quick and slick Reginald "Ray Ray" Gray in the monthly ESPN boxing card main event Friday, July 11, at the Sahara Hotel and Casino.

Also on the card promoted by Bob Arum's Top Rank, Inc., of Las Vegas and New York in association with the Sahara, will be an ESPN National Championship Tournament Western Finals bout in the welterweight division and an ESPN National Championship Tournament Western Semi-Final fight in the middleweight class.

The card in the Sahara Space Center starts at 6 p.m. with doors opening at 5. The 10-round main will begin about 7:30.

Tickets, priced at \$10 for general admission and \$15 for reserved ringside, are on sale 24 hours a day, seven days a week at the Sahara casino cage.

Kinchen, rated the No. 1 contender by both the World Boxing Association and the

World Boxing Council, enters with a record of 35-1-2 and 27 knockouts. He also enters knowing that any loss will, in all probability, deny him a shot against world middleweight champion Hagler.

"I'm treating this as if it were a championship fight," says the 28-year-old Kinchen from San Diego, "because any loss and there goes my title shot with Hagler. I'm taking Gray seriously and I'm not looking past him."

As well he shouldn't. Gray, also 28 and from Cleveland, has a record of 12-2-1 with six knockouts and is a superb boxer, the kind of fighter who can give a puncher like Kinchen trouble. He's also tall at 6-foot-2, four inches taller than Kinchen.

Gray won the ESPN National Championship Tournament in the middleweight division last year, stopping Keith Adams, who recently went the distance with former WBC welterweight champion Milton McCrory, in only the second round and Charles "Machine Gun" Carter in the sixth.

Kinchen, who learned his trade in Las Vegas and had 14 of his first 19 fights here, has not fought since July of last year. He holds wins over such world-ranked contenders as Murray Sutherland, Alex Ramos and Buster Drayton. His lone loss came in a world title-elimination bout to the late James Shuler on a close and controversial decision.

The semi-main matches teenager Javier Suazo of Tucson, Ariz., against Rollin Williams of Phoenix in a 10-round bout for the Western welterweight championship. Suazo, coming off a seventh-round knockout of Kenny Lopez on May 23 in Las Vegas, has a record of 15-2 with six knockouts. Williams, coming off a win over Reggie Miller on that same card, has a mark of 13-4 with six knockouts.

In an eight-round Western middleweight semi-final bout Kenny Snow of Dallas meets Tim Williams of San Diego. Snow has a record of 23-3 with 16 knockouts and has stopped seven of his past eight opponents while Williams has a mark of 11-1

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JAMES "THE HEAT" KINCHEN

athletes. Bias failed a number of courses and, like many of his teammates, would not graduate. That's typical in high-powered college athletics.

Some say it doesn't matter because Bias would make a fortune as a pro. But it does matter, because the working life of a professional athlete is short and can be ended in

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Minton added to Sahara boxing card

Frank Minton has been added to Friday's boxing card at the Sahara and will replace Ray Gray in the scheduled 10-round main event against James Kinchen.

Gray withdrew after reportedly suffering an injury during training over the weekend.

Minton, 29, from Indianapolis, is 14-4 with eight knockouts. He has won his last two bouts, an eight-round decision over Danny Blake on Feb. 9 and a fifth-round knockout over Greg McPherson on June 21.

Before the two wins, Minton had lost three straight, including a ninth-round knockout defeat to Kinchen on June 30, 1985.

Kinchen, of San Diego, is 35-1-2 with 27 knockouts and is ranked No. 1 by both the World Boxing Association and World Boxing Council. He reportedly is in line for a fight later this year with middleweight contender Robbie Sims.

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