

# Las Vegas rolls out red carpet for Arena Bowl

By Tasha Pope  
Sentinel-Voice

There's a first time for everything, and this time Las Vegas will be home for the 19th Annual Arena Bowl on Sunday at 11:30 a.m. at the Thomas and Mack Center on East Tropicana at Spencer at the UNLV campus.

"In the past, we've always played the games where teams had the best record," said Chris McCloskey, senior

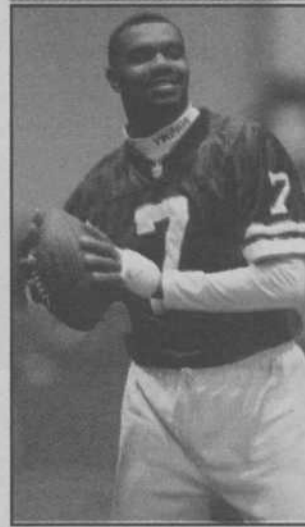
vice president of communications for the Arena Football League.

Well, things have changed in the growing world of AFL football. The AFL is conducting the championship game in a predetermined site for the first time in the league's history.

"We knew we were going to have the bowl in Las Vegas for a year [in advance], so we were able to add other

events," McCloskey continued.

Adding "other events" is an understatement when the full buffet of this weekend's lineup was laid out. It is a well-seasoned plan, marinating and ready to tantalize the crowds. There will be celebrities, musicians, and athletes, with emphasis on fun, excitement and entertainment at different venues around town, happening



Randall Cunningham

from dusk until dawn — and this is meant in literal terms, because this is, after all, Vegas.

Although, our popular home team Gladiators did not make the finals this year, they will take part as hosts for fans and visiting players at some of the weekend events.

The weekend officially begins Thursday at the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino. That's where the Arena Ball Awards will be take place. This event is to pay homage to AFL's top 2005 performers.

On its first two days, Friday and Saturday, the Fan Fest events will be held downtown on Fremont Street. The action begins at 3:00 p.m. and continues all

day until 11:00 p.m. The best part about the Fan Fest is that it's free to the public.

"We'll have AFL theme displays... to interactive ex-

(See Football, Page 15)

## Chappelle performs surprise L.A. gigs

LOS ANGELES (AP) - Is Dave Chappelle back? The AWOL comedian dropped in unannounced at two popular comedy clubs Wednesday night, saying he had just arrived in Los Angeles and felt like performing. Chappelle served up some impromptu standup to stunned audiences at the Hollywood Improv and the Comedy Store. "The place went ballistic. The kids were on their feet. We had a college night going on," said Reeta Piazza, special events manager at the Improv. Chappelle, 31, took off last month to South Africa for a "spiritual retreat," leaving his fans - and even his agent and publicist - wondering where he went.

After Comedy Central announced that the planned May 31 debut of the third season of "Chappelle's Show" had been postponed, the magazine Entertainment Weekly reported that Chappelle had checked himself into a mental health facility in South Africa. But Chappelle denied checking into a mental facility or having a drug problem in an interview with Time magazine. Instead, he fled to stay with friends in Durban because he was not happy with the direction of the show, which is behind only "South Park" as Comedy Central's most-watched program. Comedy Store general manager Dean Gelber said Chappelle joked about politics and other topics but did not indicate whether he would return for another season on Comedy Central.

Calls to Chappelle's publicist and Comedy Central were not returned Friday.

## Crowe, Howard reunite for Oscar-worthy biopic

By Kam Williams  
Sentinel-Voice

Hollywood loves an Horatio Alger-style yarn that chronicles the triumphant struggle of a working-class hero over seemingly insurmountable adversity. And if ever there was an underdog with a rags-to-riches tale tailor-made for celluloid, it was James J. Braddock (1906-1974). In fact, in his case, it's more of a relief-to-royalty story.

Born in a modest Manhattan flat on West 48th St., Jim was raised by his Irish immigrant parents with his six siblings just across the river in New Jersey. After dropping out of high school to pursue a career as a boxer, he spent the Twenties in a series of odd jobs, as an errand boy, as a printer's apprentice, as a stevedore on the docks, etcetera, while working his way up the ranks of the light heavyweight division.

By 1929, after piling up an impressive record in over 40 professional bouts despite being plagued by a chronic injury to his right hand, he finally landed that elusive title fight. Yet, worse than his ensuing loss of a 15-round decision to the champion, Tommy Loughran, was the Stock Market crash, later that year, which would plunge much of the country into The Great Depression.

Wiped out financially, and with a wife and three kids to support, Jim's chasing his dream had to take a back seat to the family's desperate struggle for survival. Soon, like many of his fellow Americans, Braddock was to find himself in dire straits, standing on soup and unemployment lines, and accepting public relief simply to subsist.

However, his personal plight turned into a public spectacle and a source of shame, when his taking welfare became the subject of ridicule in the local tabloids. Somehow summoning up a combination of grace, courage and confidence in the face of utter humiliation, Braddock persevered, choosing to train again, this time as a heavy weight.

Luck was with the noble warrior the second go-round, and it is this rise from the ashes which is the subject of "Cinderella Man," ostensibly based on the Jeremy Schaap best seller by the same name. This brilliant bio-pic comes courtesy of director Ron Howard and actor Russell Crowe, the same pair who collaborated successfully on "A Beautiful Mind,"

the Academy Award-winning Best Picture of 2002 about the life and times of troubled Princeton professor John Nash.


Here, Crowe turns in the sort of unparalleled performance we've come to expect of the perennial Oscar-nominee, adopting a period Noo Yawk accent, a tough dude attitude, even undergoing a physical transformation to bear an uncanny resemblance to the title character. Rene Zellweger is nearly as impressive as Mae, Braddock's devoted, if understandably alarmed, spouse. For all indications in this somber-toned, costume drama point to an unavoidable showdown with the formidable Max Baer (Craig Bierko), a reigning champion with fists of stone which had already pummeled two opponents to death inside the ring.

Nonetheless, since Braddock was still on the dole, he needed little encouragement from Joe Gould (Paul Giamatti), his motor-mouthed manager, to sign-on for a series of increasingly ill-advised contests versus more highly regarded opponents. Beating the odds again and again in a series of surprising upsets, he was dubbed "Cinderella Man" by then-sportswriter Damon Runyon, who knew a fairy tale when he saw one.

Braddock's redemption day arrived on June 13, 1935, at the Madison Square Garden Bowl in Long Island City. The question left to be answered was whether he would emerge victorious from his historic encounter with golden boy Baer, or if this would be the night when the Cinderella dream ends. Although his movie might be best described as a cross of "Seabiscuit" (because of the era) and "Rocky" (because of the sport), Howard has fashioned a fine enough film to stand on its own, even if the production falls a tad short of either of the above in terms of packing an emotional punch.

What does make this picture unique and, thus, memorable, is that it effectively paints James Braddock as a desperate man all out of options whose return to the ring was fueled more by a primal urge to provide for his family than by a narcissistic desire for notoriety. And in that capacity, he came to inspire legions of similarly-situated fans, the salt-of-the-Earth ready and willing, but hopelessly unable to find gainful employment.

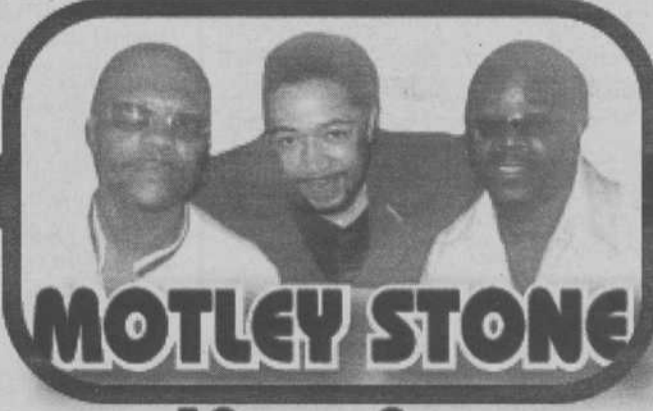
Excellent (3.5 stars). Rating: PG-13 for profanity and intense boxing violence.



## ROYAL STREET THEATRE

**MOTOWN FRIDAYS AT JERRY'S NUGGET CASINO!**

**Appearing**  
**JUNE 10, 17 and 24**



### MOTLEY STONE

**10pm - 2pm**

**Ladies FREE!**  
Gentlemen \$5  
with a 2 drink minimum

1821 Las Vegas Blvd. N. - (702) 399-3000  
www.jerrysnugget.com

