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WORLD CHAMPIONS VARGAS, McGIRT AND LEIJA TO BE HONORED @ FRIDAY'S "NIGHT OF HONOR"
AMERICAN BANK CENTER ARENA

CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS---Former World Champions **Fernando Vargas**, **James "Buddy" McGirt** and **Jesse James Leija** will be awarded "**Honorary" membership** to the **Corpus Christi Boxing Hall of Fame** during ceremonies at this Friday's "Night of Honor" boxing event at the American Bank Center Arena.

The six bout fight card, which begins at 8:00 pm, will be headlined by 2000 Olympic Gold Medalist and world rated featherweight contender, Rocky Juarez in the main event.

For local fans, the highlight of the evening will be when former local favorites Lefty Barrera, Jesse Benavides, Roberto Elizondo, Lupe Suarez and Frankie Warren are inducted to the Corpus Christi Boxing Hall of Fame.

Added to the event will be an additional ceremony honoring Vargas, McGirt and Leija as "honorary members." According to event coordinator, Lester Bedford, the three former champions will be honored for having fought in Corpus Christi. "We wanted to have a separate category for admission to the Corpus Christi Boxing Hall of Fame - one that honored former World Champions who fought in Corpus Christi during their career," explained Bedford.

"It happens to be that we invited these three former champions and all three said they would love to be there in support of these great Corpus Christi fighters. While here, this is a great opportunity for us to tell them how much we appreciate them having fought here and they will always be remembered for doing so."

Bedford said all three are planning to attend Thursday's weighins (2:00 pm at Holiday Inn, Emerald Beach, Shoreline Blvd) and be at ringside for the boxing event.

Vargas, McGirt and Leija will be honored in the ring between two preliminary bouts. The five Corpus Christi fighters will be honored prior to the main event, which will be the last bout on the card.

Vargas most recently fought in Corpus Christi, when he headlined an HBO boxing event at the American Bank Center last March 26. Vargas was a 1996 U.S. Olympian and is the former IBF and WBA World Jr. Middleweight Champion. Vargas is scheduled to face "Sugar" Shane Mosley on Feb. 26 on HBO pay-per-view.

McGirt fought Corpus Christi's Warren at Memorial Coliseum twice. Warren won the first contest (July 20, 1986) and in a rematch (Feb. 14, 1988), McGirt defeated Warren, winning the IBF World Jr. Welterweight Championship. The Warren vs McGirt bout was Corpus Christi's first world championship bout, ever. McGirt also went on the capture he IBF World Welterweight Championship over Simon Brown in 1991. McGirt is now regarded as one of boxing's top trainers.

The 38 year old Leija is the two-time world champion from San Antonio. Leija fought in Corpus Christi a total of seven times, from 1989 to 1999.