

LI boxer Patrick Day dies from brain injury



Junior middleweight Patrick Day, of Freeport, weighs in at the Nassau Coliseum on July 14, 2017 a day ahead of his fight against Eric Walker. Photo Credit: Jeffrey Basinger

By Robert Cassidyrobert.cassidy@newsday.com [@casswriter44](#) Updated October 16,

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Freeport boxer Patrick Day, who had been in a coma since Saturday night, died Wednesday at Chicago's Northwestern Memorial Hospital after suffering a traumatic brain injury during his fight, promoter Lou DiBella said in a statement.

Day, 27, was surrounded by his family, trainer Joe Higgins and close friends, DiBella said.

Day, a world-rated junior middleweight, was knocked out in the 10th round of a USBA title fight by Charles Conwell at Wintrust Arena.



"I'm broken," said Higgins, who stayed at the fighter's bedside until he passed. "He was the nicest kid I've ever met in my life. He wasn't just a kid I trained in the gym, he was a son to me."

Higgins spoke to Conwell Wednesday, after Day had passed. "He's a beautiful kid," said Higgins. "He's hurting too. We can't forget him."

"It becomes very difficult to explain away or justify the dangers of boxing at a time like this," DiBella said in his statement. "This is not a time where edicts or pronouncements are appropriate, or the answers are readily available. It is, however, a time for a call to action. While we don't have the answers, we certainly know many of the questions, have the means to answer them, and have the opportunity to respond responsibly and accordingly and make boxing safer for all who participate. This is a way we can honor the legacy of Pat Day. Many people live much longer than Patrick's 27 years, wondering if they made a difference or positively affected their world. This was not the case for Patrick Day when he left us. Rest in peace and power, Pat, with the angels."

Day was a former New York Golden Gloves champion and an alternate on the 2012 U.S. Olympic team. As a pro, he reached the top 10 in the 154-pound world rankings. In 2017, while fighting at the Nassau Coliseum, Day won the WBC Continental Americas title. The high volume of punches he delivered in every fight endeared him to boxing fans.

But the way he carried himself outside of the ring ultimately will define his legacy.

“There is not a person in the sport who has a bad thing to say about him,” DiBella said.

Titus Williams trained with Day at the Freeport PAL boxing gym.

“I’ve seen him at the gym six times a week, every week for over 10 years,” said Williams, a former Golden Gloves champion with a 9-2 pro record. “He always set the standard that I was trying to catch up to. He believed in me before I believed in myself. He inspired so many fighters.”

Williams saw Day at the gym the night before he left for Chicago. They talked about the fight and the new T-shirts Day had made for the trip. The last thing Williams remembers was Day’s smile. “He had the same smile he always has,” Williams said.

The Long Island boxing community is a small, tight-knit group, with fighters often criss-crossing gyms to get sparring. It was not unusual that Day crossed paths with many local fighters before traveling. Fittingly, his smile is what they remember most.

Tyrone James, an Elmont super welterweight, sparred with Day a week before the fight. “We were talking about the fight and I was telling him he was ready, he was very sharp,” he said. “And the whole time I was talking, he was just smiling back. His smile was everything. Pat was just a happy-go-lucky kid.”

Tommy Rainone, a Farmingdale welterweight, ran into him at the Westbury Boxing Gym and gave him advice on where to find good pizza in Chicago. "Some fighters try to embrace the tough-guy image," he said. "That wasn't Pat. He would talk with anyone and he would be smiling the whole time he was talking with you. His smile was his trademark."

Day earned an associate's degree in Food and Nutrition from Nassau Community College and, subsequently, a bachelor's degree in Health and Wellness from Kaplan University.

"He was a son, brother, and good friend to many," DiBella said in his statement Wednesday. "Pat's kindness, positivity, and generosity of spirit made a lasting impression with everyone he met."

Day was 14 when he snuck into his neighbor's garage and started hitting a heavy bag. Joe Higgins had no problem allowing the neighborhood kids to use his makeshift boxing gym. But it always had to be supervised. Hearing the familiar thud, thud, thud, he rushed out to the garage to find Day.

"My initial thought was, 'What the heck are you doing there?'" Higgins said in 2018. "Then I saw that he had a certain skill set and I said, 'It's time for you to go to the gym.'"

The gym was the Freeport PAL Boxing Club.

"Instead of just kicking me out of the garage, I got a formal invitation to the gym," Day said in 2018.

Higgins will never forget the hugs he got on a daily basis from Day. "Every time he came into the gym, he hugged me," said the trainer. "Or if I saw him by his car, he'd hug me goodbye. He hugged me every day. Who does that? I hugged him more than I hugged my wife."

Higgins, a retired New York City firefighter, lost a brother, also a firefighter, on 9/11. A few years later, he began training Day.

"I thought I could handle it," said Higgins. "But I really couldn't. Patrick saved my life after 9/11. He's the person who healed me. He does not know how much of a hero he is to me. My beautiful hero is gone."

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Patrick Day photos

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Photos of Patrick Day, a boxer from Freeport, who died on Oct. 16, 2019, at age 27 from a traumatic brain injury suffered during a fight four days earlier.



Photo Credit: Newsday/Photo By Patrick E. McCarthy

Patrick Day, left, from Freeport shoots a straight left at Adrian Marte of IKE Ranoy's in win at 141 pound class on Day 2 of the Long Island Amateur Boxing Championships on Aug. 13, 2009.



Photo Credit: NEWSDAY/Photo By Patrick E. McCarthy

Patrick Day, right, representing Freeport PAL, gets the win over Lewis Aponte from the Juan LaPorte Boxing Club on Aug. 15, 2009.



Photo Credit: Patrick E. McCarthy

Freeport's Patrick Day trains in the ring with coach Joe Higgins on April 27, 2012, before heading to Las Vegas for the National Golden Gloves tournament.



Photo Credit: Patrick E. McCarthy

Freeport's Patrick Day trains on on April 27, 2012, before heading to Las Vegas for the National Golden Gloves tournament.



Photo Credit: Patrick E. McCarthy

Freeport's Patrick Day gets ready by shadow boxing in front of mirror before heading to Las Vegas for the National Golden Gloves tournament.



Photo Credit: Patrick E. McCarthy

Patrick Day, a junior middleweight boxer from Freeport with a win over Carl Hill at Resorts World in Queens on June 29, 2013.



Photo Credit: Jeffrey Basinger

Junior middleweight Patrick Day, of Freeport, weighs in at Nassau Coliseum on July 14, 2017 a day ahead of his fight against Eric Walker.



Photo Credit: Marcus Villagran

Patrick Day, white trunks, scores 10 rounds unanimous decision over Eric Walker in a junior middleweight bout at the Nassau Coliseum on July 15, 2017.



Photo Credit: Newsday/J. Conrad Williams Jr.

Freeport's Patrick Day, right, mixing up with Kyrone Davis in round 6 during their 10-round welterweight bout at Barclays Center on March 3, 2018.



Photo Credit: Shelby Knowles

From left, Patrick Day, Joe Higgins and Seanie Monaghan at the Freeport PAL Boxing Club on Oct. 23, 2018.



Photo Credit: Getty Images/Dylan Buell

Patrick Day, left, and Charles Conwell exchange punches in the seventh round of their super welterweight bout at Wintrust Arena on October 12, 2019 in Chicago, Illinois.