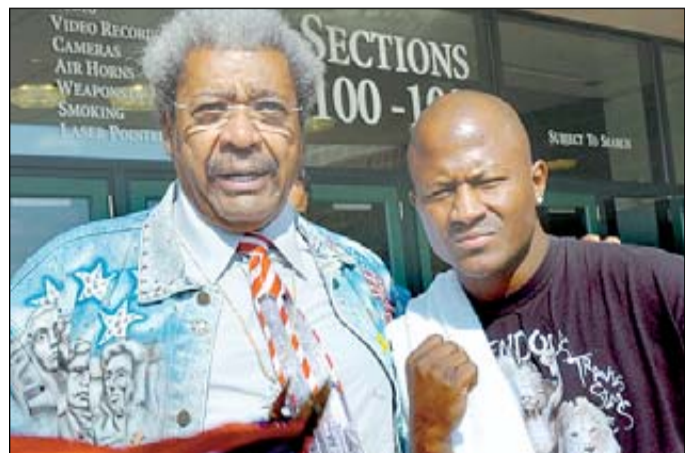


SPORTS EDITOR
GARY ROGO
330-6210
grogo@ctpost.com



Ned Gerard/Connecticut Post

Loquacious Don King, left, supports Norwalk's Travis Simms Thursday at the Arena at Harbor Yard. The boxing promoter also touched on subjects from George W. Bush to P.T. Barnum.

King, Simms bring boxing to Arena

By **MICHAEL FORNABAIO**
mfornabaio@ctpost.com

BRIDGEPORT — The champ was stuck in traffic, so Don King got to do what he does best: evocation, education, elaboration, pontification. Then Travis Simms showed up from Brooklyn and threw in another big

Joachim Alcine vs. Travis Simms

WBA super welterweight title bout July 7, Arena at Harbor Yard

word: unification.

Simms, of Norwalk, will fight Joachim Alcine on July 7 at the Arena at Harbor Yard in defense of Simms' WBA super welterweight title.

But Floyd Mayweather Jr., who holds the WBC title, and Cory Spinks, who has the IBF belt, are on his mind, too.

"I want to show, hey, I'm 36 years old, and I'm still at an elite level," Simms said at a press conference Thursday outside the arena. "I'm ready to unify the division."

Mayweather took the title from

Oscar De La Hoya in May. Simms, who is 25-0 with 19 knockouts, noted that both of those fighters moved up to that weight class; he's the natural super welterweight, never fighting at less than 153 pounds.

"Basically, unifying the title, becoming the undisputed champion, is something I'll always long for," Simms said.

Still, this fight means a lot to him, bringing title fights to Fairfield County, defending his belt near his own hometown in a bout that will air on Showtime.

This will be the first boxing card

at the Arena at Harbor Yard. It probably could not have happened, general manager Lynn Carlotto noted, had another event not pulled out of a July 5-6 date.

"You never want to lose a show," Carlotto said. "But you know that old line, things happen for a reason?"

Tickets (\$35-200, some ringside seats at \$350) are available at the arena box office and through Ticketmaster. Carlotto said sales started well.

► Please see **KING** on C3

YANKEES SKID TO A HALT

Rockies finish sweep; N.Y. slips back to .500

By **PETE CALDERA**
The (Hackensack N.J.) Record

DENVER — Tripped at Coors Field, and robbed of all their forward momentum, the Yankees couldn't merely bow to the Rockies' sudden superiority.

Blown signs and baserunning gaffes compounded the Yankees' misery Thursday afternoon. Roger Clemens even blamed a hot, dry wind for some of his command issues. And when the Rockies had finished off a three-game sweep with a 4-3 victory, all that good Yankee karma had vanished into Denver's thin air.

"Sure, the good feeling has gone away," manager Joe Torre said of his club, which had won 11 of its previous 12 games. "But the reality of what kind of team we are ... we have to recapture that."

That new start begins tonight, with Kei Igawa's return to the majors against the slumping San Francisco Giants — amid the sideshow of Barry Bonds' home run chase.

At this point, the Yankees who fell back to .500 will use any distraction necessary to forget Thursday's performance.

Bobby Abreu missed a hit-and-run sign in the first inning, which caused Derek Jeter to be hung up between first and second and started a brutal trend.

Robinson Cano was doubled off second base to end the fifth, and Jeter's ill-conceived sprint from second to third on a ball hit right at the shortstop doomed a sixth-inning rally.

"We made mistakes that can't happen," Torre said. "Especially when you're not scoring runs." "It's something we certainly didn't expect," Torre said of the run drought. "Not that we took anything for granted."

Over the first two games, the Yankees (35-35) were partly stumped by their inexperience against starters Josh Fogg and Jeff Francis. But they'd seen plenty of Rodrigo Lopez (4-0) before Thursday, and could only manage a two-run homer by Hideki Matsui in 5th innings.

Entering the game, the ex-Orioles right-hander was 7-8 with a 6.02 ERA lifetime vs. the Yanks. But Clemens (1-2) handed back his 2-0 lead, surrendering second-inning solo homers. Garrett

ROCKIES 4
YANKEES 3



By the numbers

- 41** Runs scored by Yankees in three-game series at Colorado in 2002
- 5** Runs scored by Yanks in last three games at Colorado.
- 0** RBIs by A-Rod in last three games.
- 10½** Games Yanks trail Red Sox in AL East

► Please see **ROCKIES** on C2

BASEBALL INSIDE

- **Jason Giambi** agrees to meet with George Mitchell on steroids investigation. **C2**
- **Yanks** need Kei Igawa to just give them a chance vs. Giants. Yankees watch on **C2**
- **Matt Beech's** eight walks hurt Bluefish in 5-4 loss to Road Warriors. **C3**



This date in sports

1994 — The Houston Rockets, led by Hakeem Olajuwon, win their first NBA title, beating New York 90-84 in Game 7 of the finals. Olajuwon gets 25 points, 10 rebounds, seven assists and three blocks.

Rt. 110, Shelton • 929-6500 • SportsCenterCT.com

TRAVELERS CHAMPIONSHIP

Treasure hunt



Associated Press

Hunter Mahan, coming off a tie for 13th at the U.S. Open, reeled off four birdies in a row on the back nine and threatened the TPC course record of 61 before carding a 62 on Thursday afternoon at Cromwell.

Solid start for J.J.

By **NEILL OSTROUT**
nostrout@ctpost.com

CROMWELL — On the way to claiming his first PGA Tour win last season at the TPC of River Highlands, J.J. Henry owned the par-4 ninth hole.

The 406-yard dogleg right, with its deep fairway bunkers and elevated green, was no match for a hot Henry. The Fairfield native rolled in a 9-foot putt for birdie in Thursday's first round, made a 23-footer on Saturday during his dramatic 63, and sank another putt for three during Sunday's final round as he strolled to victory.

As he began the defense of his crown Thursday at the Travelers Championship, No. 9 came back to bite Henry just a bit. His approach from the fairway went long and he three-putted the tricky green for a bogey.

"I made two sloppy bogeys," said Henry, who also three-putted the par-5 sixth. "Other than that, I played pretty solid."

Henry shot a 2-under-par 68 Thursday morning. While not a particularly superb score, Henry's 68

► Follow the Travelers on www.connpost.com with tournament updates, Web exclusives and staff blogs.



Brian A. Pounds/Connecticut Post

J.J. Henry of Fairfield watches his tee shot on No. 17 en route to an opening-round 68 at the Travelers Championship on Thursday. More Travelers coverage on C5

► Please see **HENRY** on C5

Mahan (62) shows flair; scores go low

By **LOU PINTEK**
lpintek@ctpost.com

CROMWELL — From the new route through the main grounds of the TPC at River Highlands — bypassing the quarry-like development that will house a state-of-the-art practice facility — to the corporate structures situated throughout the golf course, it's apparent that the Travelers Insurance Group is sparing little expense to house what it hopes will be a premier stop on the PGA Tour.

Though the first installment of the newly christened Travelers Championship was ultimately derailed by inclement weather, it wasn't lacking for spectacular golf.

From unheralded Michael Sim's record-tying 29 on the front nine to Hunter Mahan's afternoon charge to the top of the leaderboard with a 62, the only damper was the second of two weather delays that eventually caused play to be halted shortly after 7 p.m. with 39 players still on the course. Play is set to resume at 7:30 a.m. today, but will have no bearing on the Round 2 starting times.

Mahan, who finished tied for second behind Fairfield's J.J. Henry a

► Please see **RELAXED** on C5

Leaderboard

Hunter Mahan	31-31—62	..-8
Chris DiMarco	33-31—64	..-6
Carl Pettersson	35-30—65	..-5
Bob Heintz	31-34—65	..-5
Michael Sim	29-36—65	..-5
Kenny Perry	31-34—65	..-5
Brad Faxon	33-32—65	..-5

Notables

Woody Austin	33-33—66	..-4
David Toms	33-34—67	..-3
J.J. Henry	35-33—68	..-2
Vijay Singh	34-34—68	..-2

(40 golfers did not finish)

► Scores on C5, tee times on C4

► Today's TV: 3-6 p.m. (Golf Channel) ► Today's forecast: High 74, low 59; partly cloudy

Clarke endures ache

CROMWELL — He tugged his visor down over his eyes and grabbed the pack of smokes from his golf bag. Darren Clarke found the lighter in his pocket, lit the cigarette and took a deep drag.

As he blew out the smoke, Clarke plopped himself on the steps leading down to the putting green. Above him was a cloudless blue sky. Below was a sea of rich, green grass. Hopefully, Clarke saw both. He took one last puff and flipped what was left of the cigarette over the hedge. A couple of minutes later, Clarke lit up another one.

His caddy, Casey Kerr, sat down beside him on the steps. Kerr talked. Clarke smoked. It was time to decompress. Put the round behind and put reality back in front. Clarke dug a cell phone out of his pocket and made a call as Kerr put his arm around Clarke's shoulders and gave him a friendly squeeze.

His two boys, Tyrone and Conor, are Clarke's priority now. Tyrone is 9, Conor 6. Together, they are learning how to live without their mother. Clarke, however, has to deal with something even harder.

Learning how to live without his wife and partner.



CHRIS ELSBERRY

► Please see **CLARKE** on C5