



#ITHEAVYHITTERS 2026

WELLINGTON

Welcome to IT Heavy Hitters 2026

- An introduction:

I'm Mike Dawes and IT Heavy Hitters is a project back after having raised over \$900,000 between our IT and Construction events. I created this from a combination of positive and negative events over the last few years and in essence IT Heavy Hitters is doing for others what I did in 2012 myself. Since 2014, myself along with the fight experts and friends from around NZ have put on some of the biggest corporate fight nights Wellington and Auckland has ever seen, and now it's coming back!

I was 'that guy', the type that spent all day sat around staring at a screen or in meetings, and then at night staring at another screen, with the time in between probably eating, drinking too much alcohol and not spending enough quality time with my family. I had always been fit and used to run 5 to 10km a day and did sports four or five days a week on top of that, but somewhere in life I got comfortable, got lazy and became obese.

Then it all changed when I took a new job and had the opportunity to get involved in a charity boxing event. A friend of mine had been involved in a similar event in 2009 and I'd followed his development and watched often thinking "I could do that". I made the next step, did some enquiries and started training up at Heretaunga Boxing Club in Upper Hutt. Here I worked with two coaches - Sasha, who helped me with all the technical aspects of boxing, and Doug McLay - who constantly pushed me physically into shape ready for fight night.

After months of training and coaching and dropping around 25kg in weight, I stepped into the ring and it was on. Sasha and Doug were in my corner, my family and friends were in the audience, the atmosphere electric, but when the bell goes, it's just you and the other guy in the ring. After three rounds I emerged the winner, it still took weeks to appreciate the effort we'd all put in. I continued to train with Doug after my fight, right up until July 2013 when the devastating news came that he had sadly taken his own life. It was a shock to those who knew him through the club; I can't even begin to imagine how it impacted his family and close friends.

After participating in the charity boxing event I had thoughts about running a similar event myself as the night was not only one of the best experiences of my life but raised funds for well-deserved charities. However other than a commercial driver I didn't really have a motive for it – that was until we lost Doug.

I approached Mark Hampton (MTI) and others with the idea of creating an event as they both have a huge amount of corporate fight experience, and both were incredibly keen to help. They were also both directly involved in my fight night in 2012; they knew Doug and both have been impacted by the effects of suicide directly.

With years of awesome shows and over \$900,000 raised so far, it's time to get behind Voices of Hope and their fight against suicide.



Voices of Hope

VOICES *of hope*

Mental Health Charity, Voices of Hope (VoH) was founded in 2014 by Genevieve Mora and Jazz Thornton. Both having fought mental illness they felt the need to use their past experiences alongside their passion for creating content to provoke and bring change.

Voices of Hope is a lived experience storytelling platform.

VoH share stories of people who have faced mental health challenges, focusing on the skills and tools they used on their journeys. Through the voices of those with lived experience, VoH shares real, raw and vulnerable content.

Both founders regularly speak at schools, corporates and conferences sharing their own lived experience.

Since the launch of Voices of Hope, their content has received both national and international recognition and has caught the attention of people and organisations wanting to support their vision.



Blue Team – Green Gloves Boxing Gym

Pelesauma (Pele) Leififi is the Head Coach of Green Gloves Boxing Gym, a club built from humble beginnings nearly two decades ago. Green Gloves first opened its doors in Newtown, a neighbourhood populated with migrant families at the time — the same community where Pele grew up and learned the values that continue to shape the gym today. For the past five years, the gym has operated from Vivian Street, continuing to grow its culture of discipline, belonging, and opportunity.

Pele's love for boxing was instilled in him at a young age by his father the late Leififi Johnson whom he credits for both his skills and his passion for the sport. He went on to compete and represent Wellington as a young boxer throughout the 90s. Green Gloves remains deeply rooted in amateur boxing and continues to support Olympicstyle boxing pathways for its athletes.

This year, the team has joined the IT Heavy Hitters corporate charity event — a cause that truly resonates with us and is close to our hearts. It's a chance to teach newcomers solid boxing fundamentals in a safe, supportive environment while opening the door for anyone keen to step onto the amateur pathway. We look forward to working alongside Rykers Boxing Academy and IT Heavy Hitters throughout this journey and raising money for Voices of Hope.

Pele credits the longevity and success of Green Gloves to the dedication of his coaching team — a group whose loyalty, passion, and shared vision have kept the gym strong and moving forward. Together, they remain committed to shaping champions in and out of the ring.



Coaching Schedule

Tuesday:	19:00 – 20:00
Thursday:	19:00 – 20:00
Wednesday or Friday:	18:30 – 20:00

Red Team – Rykers Boxing Academy

Mathew Legge began his boxing journey in 2010, training and competing out of the very first gym he signed up to. During this time, he was proud to be part of the first four ITHH tournaments, later taking on a more senior coaching role at the 9th ITHH event.

In 2023, Mathew founded Rykers Boxing Academy, a values-based boxing gym built on purpose rather than profit. The academy was created to foster a positive, disciplined training environment that motivates, empowers, and develops winners — not only in the ring, but in life.

This commitment to athlete development and coaching excellence led to Mathew being selected for the 2025 Wellington Regional Coaching Team for Nationals.

Rykers Boxing Academy looks forward to continuing its journey, supporting the boxing community, and being part of this ITHH event.



Coaching Schedule

Tuesday:	18:00 - 19:30
Thursday:	18:00 - 19:30
Friday:	18:00 – 19:00

Training & Selection Process

In mid-January, all contenders will gather for a half day training and evaluation session, the date is to be confirmed. You'll be allocated either the morning slot or the afternoon slot closer to the time and space is a premium so unfortunately no spectators are permitted. Both coaches get to run sessions with all contenders to review and analyse your starting fitness and ability levels. After that you'll be split into two teams (red or blue) based on a mix of an even split of contender's height, weight, sex etc, and your preference where possible. **Not everyone will get their preferred gym**, and if you are serious about this event you'll make the 14 weeks work regardless.

You'll receive an intensive 14 week training program to get you ready to fight. Both coaches have their own routines, classes, styles and depending on which team you end up at dictates the when the where and the how. Training starts end of January and runs for the 14 weeks leading up to fight night. During that time you'll be pushed hard in sessions covering fitness and stamina, theory and practical boxing coaching.

You'll be introduced to sparring and full contact boxing, building up from light contact to ready to step into the ring. During the training period, the coaches will decide who will be matched with who, based on a number of factors. Those factors include readiness, fitness and attendance – so turning up is key!

Selection will happen around 4-5 weeks out and at that point final matchups will be announced. **Not everyone gets to fight – I can't stress this enough!** Like I mentioned above, there are many factors. If you're not selected for the initial picks, just continue to train as if you are. People drop out all the time so you need to be ready should the opportunity come. Do not give up if you don't get selected, we generally have several fighters drop out in the last 2 weeks due to various reasons and other contenders had to step in and fill those spots.

Schedule

Wellington team selection:	March 21st (AM)
Wellington training starts:	March 28th
Wellington weigh ins:	July 3rd
Wellington fights:	July 4th

Fight Night

Fight night will be held at the Wellington Indian Centre in Kilbirnie on July 4th 2026. There will be around 15-17 fights on the night and we expect over 1000 people watching. On the night you'll be briefed by a referee on how they will host your fight, what commands they will use and what they expect you to do. It's important for your safety and that of your opponents that you obey these rules at all times.

Fighters will undergo a medical check and a drug check to ensure they are healthy and are genuinely ready to fight. The ring will be in the centre of the room, surrounded by corporate and VIP tables and general seating around them. Fights will be a maximum of 3x2 minute rounds, unless stopped by the referee or a member of your corner team. You'll have the opportunity to select your own walkout song and enter ready to go.

The first fight of the night will be at 18:30 and the order of fights will be determined by the coaches as the selection process progresses. Although it can be a long night, you'll need to be there before the show starts around 16:30 and if required help your team mates warm up and get ready. It will soon be your turn to light up the ring and fight!

Once we've finished the show and we all chip in, fighters included to tidy the hall away, there will hopefully be an after party to kick back and reflect over your bruises and beers! The sooner we get packed up, the sooner the after party starts!

Costs

Like any sporting event there are a number of costs you can expect, and this covers off most if not all:

Cost	Item	Why?
\$230	Entry fee	Because we need to cover costs such as training, Association registration and doctors' fees
\$100 approx	16oz gloves for training if you don't have any already	You'll fight in 16oz, (or 18oz if you're over 90kgs) so you need to train in 16oz – No smaller gloves permitted
\$100 approx	Headgear	Compulsory – you will not be permitted to spar without headgear or mouthguards – no exceptions! We provide headgear for fight night. We are working on a package deal with gloves. Details to follow.
\$30 approx	Mouth guard – essential!	Compulsory – Protect those pearlies
\$15 approx	Hand wraps	And the knuckles
\$30-\$60 approx	Protective box (men)/Chest protector (women)	Compulsory for all fighters however not compulsory for training. Do you want to share sweaty boxes on the night?
\$120 approx	Blood tests (Various Hep & HIV)	Compulsory for all contenders by week 2 of training

WAIVER OF LIABILITY FOR IT HEAVY HITTERS 2026

For the purposes of this waiver, IT Heavy Hitters refers to group consisting of Rykers Boxing Academy, Green Gloves Boxing Gym, The Heavy Jitters Charitable Trust and their authorised agents, Voices of Hope and any other authorised party.

I hereby understand and acknowledge that the training, programs and events held by the IT Heavy Hitters team may expose me to many inherent risks, including accidents, injury, illness, or even death. I assume all risk of injuries associated with participation including, but not limited to, falls, contact with other participants, the effects of the weather, including high heat and/or humidity, and all other such risks being known and appreciated by me.

I hereby acknowledge my responsibility in communicating any physical and psychological concerns that might conflict with participation in activity. I acknowledge that I am physically fit and mentally capable of participating in the physical associated with boxing.

After having read this waiver and knowing these facts, and in consideration of acceptance of my participation in IT Heavy Hitters, I agree, for myself and anyone entitled to act on my behalf, to HOLD HARMLESS, WAIVE AND RELEASE the IT Heavy Hitters team, its officers, agents, employees, organisers, representatives, and successors from any responsibility, liabilities, demands, or claims of any kind arising out of my participation in the boxing training, programs and/or events.

I also acknowledge and accept that the IT Heavy Hitters team can use photos or videos of me throughout the training and event program and future events under the IT Heavy Hitters brand. This may include but is not limited to social media, video or print.

Please declare all medical conditions, existing or recent injuries which may affect your ability to participate in IT Heavy Hitters:

By my signature I indicate that I have read and understand this Waiver of Liability. I am aware that this is a waiver and a release of liability and I voluntarily agree to its terms.

Participant's Name (Please Print): _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

In case of emergency, contact: _____

Phone: _____