

## Ready To Shine - An Interview with Syd Vanderpool

Written by Joey Knish

Wednesday, 29 September 2004 18:00

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This Saturday outdoors at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, Canada's Syd 'The Jewel' Vanderpool takes on Jeff 'Left Hook' Lacy for the right to call himself the IBF Super Middleweight Champion.

Vanderpool is a 37-fight veteran from Kitchener, Ontario and is on the cusp of his first major title in his 11 year career. While he was the NABO Middleweight title-holder for a short spell and lost a tough 12-round battle to middleweight king Bernard Hopkins, he is a natural 168-pound fighter and finally has his crack at the big-time. With victories over top fighters such as title challenger Jaffa Ballogou, Tito Mendoza and Glencoffe Donovan Johnson – better known as the latest man to knockout Roy Jones Jr. – Vanderpool has been the gatekeeper at Super Middleweight for many years, and now he wants in.

Syd was kind enough to take some time out of his hectic training schedule in order to speak with TheSweetScience.com .

**JK:** How are things going in terms of preparations for the IBF Super Middleweight title fight set for Oct. 2nd at Caesars Palace?

**SV:** Things are going right according to the plan we laid out and we have been in the Poconos and everything is looking good.

**JK:** How far ahead of the fight date did you head into Las Vegas?

**SV:** I'll be in there a week before the fight.

**JK:** How is your weight right now and have you ever had any troubles making the limit?

**SV:** My weight is right on target. The one time I did struggle with weight was getting down to 160 to fight Bernard Hopkins as that wasn't my natural weight class, and I really did have a hard time getting down to 160.

**JK:** Speaking of weight, do you expect to enter the ring a few pounds over the 168 limit or closer to 175?

**SV:** Yes, I'm usually pretty good in terms of putting on 5-6 pounds after the weigh-in so about 173 would be typical.

**JK:** Was Hopkins your toughest fight to date?

**SV:** Yeah, I mean, Hopkins physically and mentally was a tough fight, but it was a great learning experience.

**JK:** Hopkins has been called a 'dirty' fighter in the past and things of that nature due to the

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tactics he uses, did you find that to be the case?

**SV:** Yeah, I don't know if you want to call it 'dirty' or 'smart', because he comes out the victor in his fights. So he does whatever it takes to win and that's why he is the champion, and that's why I'm about to get my championship.

**JK:** Hopkins was your second career loss, as your first professional loss came in your 6th fight. On paper it looks like you were beaten by a strong fighter who finished his career with 7 wins and all 7 victories came by knockout. Could he crack that hard or is there more to the story than the TKO5 loss that is registered on your record?

**SV:** He was a tough guy, very physically strong, but what happened in that fight was just that I got caught with a thumb in the eye and my eye closed up in a matter of seconds. When I went back to the corner and the referee came over and said "no more man, you're a young guy and we're not going to let you get hurt here" and the fight was stopped. So the fight was stopped between rounds and I was ahead on all the scorecards but the ref was just looking out for my best interests and you know, you can't argue with that . . . although I did that night! But looking back it may have been for the better.

**JK:** Moving ahead to your upcoming IBF super middle title fight with Jeff Lacy, do you feel he may be biting off a bit more than he can chew at this stage of his career?

**SV:** I really just have to focus on the fight at hand and you know what he brings to the table. He is strong, he can punch with the left hand, right hand, he's got good balance and he's hungry. He wants the title. So whether he is biting off more than he can chew or not, I just have to focus on beating the best Jeff Lacy that can show up that night.

**JK:** Aside from ring experience do you see yourself having physical advantages over Lacy?

**SV:** Yeah, when I watch his fights I think he punches hard, but I punch harder. He's fast but I think I'm faster. And movement-wise, I feel my movement is superior to what he brings to the table.

**JK:** In his fight with Richard Grant it seemed to me that he was hit more than he needed to or should have.

**SV:** Yes that's true, and I punch a lot harder than Richard Grant so his defense will have to be a lot sharper than it was that night.

**JK:** With a nickname of 'Left Hook' Lacy, which Jeff Lacy is known both 'as' and 'for,' do you feel that your southpaw stance will be one of the factors in neutralizing that weapon?

**SV:** Yeah, I have been boxing right-handers about 95 percent of the time and some of them bring the right hand, some of them throw the left hook. So I've seen it all since I was an amateur so it won't be anything new for me. They always try to make adjustments to my style, and me, I just have to keep doing the things I always do. It will be up for him to make adjustments to my

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style and for me to do what I do best.

**JK:** In terms of pure physics, if you are in a southpaw stance, his hook won't be able to extend like it would versus an orthodox fighter and that would seem to be in your favor. If you keep your right up and pull back the jab quickly you are in a position to block and potentially neutralize his greatest weapon.

**SV:** He's is going to be having to come to look to go over my right hand, which is my jab hand, and my jab hand is pretty quick and I can fire the jab from a distance obviously, so unless he's going to throw a leaping left hook - which I would welcome any day because he'll meet my left hand very quickly straight down the middle. So it is going to be hard for him to land that left hook effectively, and if wants to try to beat me with the left hook I'll take my chances and meet him with my left hand.

**JK:** It is interesting to note that they say the best punch to neutralize a southpaw like yourself is with a steady dose of right hands, and we haven't seen much of Lacy's right hand so far. He is obviously strong and can punch with either hand as you noted but if past performance is any indication he prefers to work the body with the hook and finish with the hook.

**SV:** The way we have prepared is for the best and worse that Jeff Lacy can bring to the fight and we are ready for anything, right and left.

**JK:** One fight at a time, but I noticed that Joe Calzaghe has decided to come back down to 168 after he had signed to face Glencoffe Johnson at 175 pounds that never materialized. He has a fight upcoming at super middle again and I know you have tried to get his attention in the past, do you ever see a fight between yourself and Calzaghe materializing?

**SV:** Really that would be up to Calzaghe because I'm pretty much looking to move on and up (in the level of competition) and if he decides he wants to stay at a certain level and doesn't ever want to step up and face the current champions then he can continue to face the washed up bums, but I'm always ready to face-off against Calzaghe.

**JK:** If it meant a trip over to the United Kingdom would you make that journey in order to face Calzaghe?

**SV:** That would have to be something my promoters would have to discuss with his promoter and work out the best deal, but I'm just interested in the fight and I've always said I want to face the best at my weight class and if I can't get that I'll move up to face the best at Light Heavyweight.

**JK:** I'm getting ahead of myself, but beyond Lacy, Calzaghe and yourself, who do you consider the top 168 pounders, as there are many European super middleweights that most of us in North America are unfamiliar with?

**SV:** I honestly don't know much about the (Mikkel) Kesslers, (Mads) Larsens and (Australian) Danny Green - although I hear he is a hard puncher - but I really don't know too much about

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these guys. But whoever is considered to be the best, that's who I want to fight.

**JK:** Economically the title fight with Lacy would appear to be the biggest to date for you and your team?

**SV:** The pay is good, but as it is in boxing, until you are a world champion and you are defending your title, you know, that's when you can sit back and say, "alright, this is why I put in all those years of hard work, this where the blood, sweat and tears pay off." But, I gotta win that title and start making defenses and that's why I'm looking forward to this fight and looking forward to shining.

**JK:** Any predictions as to how this fight is going to unfold on Saturday, October 2nd?

**SV:** Yeah, as Mr. T would say, "PAIN" (lots of laughter). You know, no prediction other than myself coming out the victor. I think it is going to be an action-packed fight and there will be some serious thunder in the ring. Lacy is coming out thinking that he punches harder than me, and I know I punch harder than him - so there is going to be a time where we stand in the center of that ring and just unload and one guy is going to back up, or one guy is going to fall. I look to be the one standing at the end of that.

**JK:** Any closing message for the fans of Syd Vanderpool?

**SV:** Just that anyone who comes out to Caesars Palace can look forward to my victory party after the fight.

**JK:** One thing I didn't want to leave without touching on is the [PRYDE](#) (Positive Reinforcement Development Enterprise, Ltd.) youth program that you have going on in Kitchener-Waterloo area of Ontario, if you can tell us a bit about your involvement with that program.

**SV:** With the [PRYDE](#) program basically what I do is I go into schools and do boxing clinics. The purpose of the clinic is to use boxing as a tool to teach life skills to the kids - sportsmanship, discipline and those sorts of things. Whatever I teach in boxing I relate it to how they can use it in life - whether it is in school or other sports. The kids respond well to it because it is like "wow, a boxer is coming, cool, cool, cool" so it is a really great tool for me to reach the kids.

**JK:** Thanks for your time Syd and hopefully we can do this again when you are crowned champion.

**SV:** Definitely. One thing I would like to mention is that there is a group of Canadians coming down to support me as we have chartered an airplane and there are 140 Canadians coming down to Caesars Palace outdoors and are going to be cheering me on, so I'll have my support there as well.

**JK:** Good Luck on October 2nd

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**SV:** Alright Joey, thanks and bye-bye.

Syd Vanderpool is certainly one of the “good guys” in the sport of boxing. He has enjoyed a solid career and is on the verge of his well-deserved title opportunity in fighting for the vacant IBF Super Middleweight title on Showtime this weekend. We extend our sincere thanks to Syd for taking the time to speak with us and wish him all the best.