

Hands of Stone vs. Granite Jaw

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The first man to ever go the distance with Phillip “the Time Bomb” Ndou (31W 3L 30 KO) , Cassius “the Hitman” Baloyi (29W 1 L 16 KO) steps up a gear when he defends his IBO junior lightweight world title against Lehlohonolo “hands of stone” Ledwaba (35 W 3 L 1 D 22 KO) on November 20th in Brakpan Johannesburg.

It’s been 3 years since the sensational and brutal battle between Ndou and Baloyi, but ask anybody who witnessed it and you’ll soon find that it’s a fight firmly engraved in their memories. At the time Baloyi was the WBU featherweight world champion and Ndou the WBU super featherweight world champion. They met in a catch-weight bout billed as the pound for pound title in South Africa. The fight turned out a classic confrontation in which neither fighter gave an inch and both put on a fistic display seldom seen in rings anywhere in the world.

On the night Ndou delivered the finest performance of his career and displayed his true qualities both as a boxer and a champion. Baloyi, on the other hand, proved his heart was as big as Africa itself. Following the fight and for some time thereafter Baloyi was no longer the man he was before, and I for one propagated that he should retire from boxing before suffering a serious injury in the ring. Ironically, it is the man who gave him the beating I now refer to who has retired first and for the very same reason.

Having only fought 3 times since, Baloyi appears to have recovered and will face a firm test come November 20, when he defends his IBO junior lightweight world title against, former IBF junior feather and WBU featherweight world champion, Ledwaba. Baloyi with his needle thread jab and rock solid defense is the favorite going into this fight, but there could well be another war coming Baloyi’s way.

Ledwaba is a man hurt, upset and craving redemption, and he will be looking to stop his former gym-mate and sparring partner. In his prime I rated Ledwaba the best pound for pound boxer in South Africa. This was at the same time the Ndou – Baloyi bout took place and for that very reason I never accepted Ndou as the pound for pound king. What would have happened in a Ledwaba – Ndou bout will now be left to many heated debates between those who saw these men in action.

Ndou was the bigger man and had a punch like a mule, when he connected well timed blows, but Ledwaba was fast and carried solid punches himself. The new Ledwaba is not as fast and slick as he once was, but he still carries a fierce fire inside. One which could carry him back into the big league and back into the ring with the man he most wants to face again—Manny Pacquiao.