Two of boxing's most talented pound-for-pound fighters will square off in a highly anticipated rematch when International Boxing Federation (IBF) "Super" 140-Pound Champion Kostya Tszyu defends his title against Interim IBF Junior Welterweight Champion Sharmba Mitchell Saturday, Nov. 6, 2004, on SHOWTIME CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING at 9 p.m. ET/PT. (delayed on West Coast).

Mitchell: It has been a long time waiting and I am anxious to get this done and over with. Ever since I came to the training camp, it is like I am trying to count down the days, like I have been in jail and marking off a calendar for each day. I do not think anyone could possibly know the anticipation and the anxiousness unless they experienced it.

Question: Has your knee bothered you since you returned to the ring after the first Tszyu fight?

Mitchell: Every now and then it may have a little pain or something like that, but nothing major. It is a repaired knee twice over, so it is never going to be 100 percent ever in life again.

Question: But it is not to the point where you think about it when you are fighting?

Mitchell: No, never.

Question: Are you surprised that Tszyu did not take any kind of a tune-up and that he is coming right back after almost two years off to defend against you?

Mitchell: That goes to show what kind of a champion we are dealing with, someone that is a warrior. He is just going to come in there and just do it. Either he can win or he cannot win.

Gary Shaw: Kostya has respect for Sharmba. Not taking a fight before is not showing any disrespect. It does show the heart of a champion. On his last journey, Felix Trinidad did not take any tune-ups before he fought (Ricardo) Mayorga. The difference is, we will just have a different verdict at the end of this Saturday night.

Begin Press Questions

Question: Compared to the last fight, what do you expect from Kostya in this fight?

Mitchell: I expect a guy that is going to come in and fight me and is not going to let up. I know it will not be easy. We both are trying to accomplish one thing and that is to win and I do not expect anything less than a hard fight.

Question: What, if anything this time around, will you be doing differently against Kostya that you did not do in the first fight?

Mitchell: A lot of little things. What I know I will benefit from this time is just me being in the ring as much as I have been, and maturing more and more in the ring. I will always keep my jab up there and things of that nature and my speed will always be there.

Question: Do you think it was a tactical error that he did not take a tune-up and, secondly, are you going to come out strong quickly and set a pace that maybe he cannot keep with?

Mitchell: We will know on Saturday if Tszyu not taking a fight was smart. I think it will probably be up to the press to make up your mind whether he was at 100 percent or anything like that. You all will have your opinions and will make your opinions. He can come out and do well, but get beat, and you are going to say he got beat because he has been inactive. We will make that determination on Nov. 6. My pace will be my pace. I am going to fight the fight that I want to fight. I try not to adapt to other people. I try to make people adapt to me.

Question: Has there been any time since the fist fight that you ever regretted going through with that bout?

Mitchell: I do not regret it because I would probably still be in lawsuits if I did not go through with it.

Question: What was it like emotionally and mentally having to deal with a fight that was postponed twice and had the site switched at least once?

Mitchell: It took me back to the days when I was 29-0 and 30-0, and I was supposed to get a world title fight, then not getting it and then having to fight another person only to still not get the title fight. I got frustrated at a young age and then did not train and ended up losing and missing my world title shot. You learn a lot from when you are young. So now it is like just deal with it, it will come. It will come back around, something will come to light. God will make everything come to light and here it is. You just stay focused. I just stayed in training and I stayed positive. I had a man in my corner that said he would put something together and I told him as long as he puts something together I will keep winning. And here we are.

Question: Did you ever think it was not going to happen?

Mitchell: No. I got to a point where it was just like OK, let me just keep fighting. And if I would have got into thinking that it would not happen, then I probably would have stayed in active. I probably would not have just taken a little tune-up fight either.

Gary Shaw: I want to comment on that. When the IBF asked for the second injury exception, Sharmba had an opportunity to go against it so that he would fight for the IBF championship, not interim. In a discussion with Sharmba, he felt all along that he wanted this fight back, that he could win the fight and he said let him (the other boxers) have it, do not oppose it because that is who (Tszyu) he wanted in the ring. That was the second injury, not the first.

Question: If Kostya takes the same approach in this fight as last time and gets very physical, do you feel a need in the beginning to get real physical back to let him know he is not going to

be allowed to get away with what he got away with last time?

Gary Shaw: Before Sharmba answers that, we have already spoken to the IBF and when the referee comes in to give his instructions, we will address that with the referee. That will not happen this time, but I will let Sharmba answer that.

Mitchell: Well, I picked up on some of my WWF moves. I probably will welcome it. If I end up putting him in a leg lock or something, do not get mad.

Question: You have a title belt at stake here, and revenge, but can you talk about what this fight would mean to your career and how people look at your career and just what it does for your record in general?

Mitchell: This fight puts me in a category with some of the great fighters. You can count how many undisputed champions there have been in the junior welter division. A win puts me in that category with them and being one of the greatest fighters in the world pound for pound.

Question: Do you feel that this would be the definitive victory in your career?

Mitchell: This fight here is what I need and what I want and will take me to bigger and better things.

Gary Shaw: I think Sharmba just thought to hit on this, but this fight is for the king of the hill of 140 pounds. It is more than just the belts that are at stake. It reopens a lot of doors for Sharmba to a lot of other fights. There are a lot of fights at 140 and big money fights for Sharmba. So it transcends the sport in that it really opens up a weight division for Sharmba Mitchell to dominate with big fights that the fans are interested in. He does not need a color picture, they will see him in black and white.

Question: What was your thinking about staying so active this past year?

Mitchell: I just wanted to fight. What good is it going to do me just to sit and do nothing? I will get fat and out of shape and do nothing. I just do not want to sit around the house and do odd jobs. I would rather be at camp making a living, doing what I love to do. Staying active is very key because you never know what is going to come up. If something good comes up, then that is great, we will take it on.

Question: But it is risky. You could have gotten an injury.

Mitchell: But that is boxing. You have to get prepared.

Question: In the first fight, your knee obviously was a big problem. How much did that take away from what you wanted to do?

Mitchell: Well, I could not plant down on my punches and sit down on my punches. I delivered some good punches, I had him hurt, but I just could not deliver the punch that I needed and I

had to put down weight on my left leg. I could not do it. So that took away from me doing that and then with all the rough tactics, I could not really defend myself like I wanted to. I could have probably thrown a low blow or something like that, but that is not me. I probably would have rough-housed him back.

Question: Is this fight more important for you than it is for Tszyu?

Mitchell: I think it is important for both of us. With him, he has to erase all the doubts and all the steam that I have been accumulating. But for me, maybe this is my time. I want this to be my time. Maybe God is set for me to get this time for me and to be bright and shine in the eyes of everybody all over the world. It is important to me and my kids. My kids, with school and things like that, you have to be in my shoes to understand.

Question: What will be the major factors that win the fight against Tszyu?

Mitchell: My heart and my skills.

Question: Do you feel that is what kept you in the first at such an even pace even though you had a bad leg?

Mitchell: Definitely, my heart kept me in there because, first of all, I had to get in there. I do not think anybody else with that type of injury would have probably got in there. Even Tszyu, with his last injury, completely called the fight off. You have to have a lot of heart to be able to try to pull something off like that. **Question**: Why did you choose California to prepare for this fight?

Mitchell: My training camp is in Vero Beach, Florida and we had two big hurricanes there. The hurricanes blew me over to the west coast and maybe it blew me over here for a better reason because I had a great training camp and I had great boxing and I could not have asked for anything more. **Question**: Who did you spar with while you were in California?

Mitchell: I had Stevie Forbes, Shane Mosley and a couple of other guys that popped through the gym. It was a great, hard training camp. It was rough. It was no picnic in the park.

Question: Tszyu has hinted that he might move to welterweight win or lose after this fight. If you do prevail, do you plan on taking on the other belt holders?

Mitchell: I cannot answer that right now because my focus is on Kostya Tszyu. Let me get through that first and then ask me the question.

Question: Has there been any more discussion about you facing Ricky Hatton in the future?

Mitchell: No, not that I have heard of.

Gary Shaw: We made a deal over in England and he (Hatton) had his opportunity. Sharmba went over and fought in England specifically to be on the card so that the English fans could get

to see him. That was the plan. He had the opportunity and he did not take the opportunity. There was more money for Hatton on the table at that time than there was for Sharmba Mitchell. So far, every fighter that Sharmba Mitchell has beaten, Ricky has had as his next opponent. He just fought Mikey Stewart to get to the No. 1 mandatory to face Sharmba again. We like purse fits instead of making deals so Sharmba can get 75 percent of the money.

Question: Do you consciously consider the aspect of psychological warfare? This summer, you mentioned that Kostya was fat. Is that part of your psychological game?

Mitchell: I mentioned that he was fat? I did not mention what nobody saw. Saying that he was overweight at the time, yeah, he was. I do not think he weighed 140 pounds when I saw him. The words of war have always been a part of boxing and as long as it is done with a classy aspect on it, I think that is what I bring to it. I am not here to fight him outside the ring. Let us get inside the ring, and that is what we are going to do. After it is over, I will take him out to dinner after I beat him.

Question: Tszyu has been rocked quite a few times early. How big of a factor is that for you going in?

Mitchell: I think anybody can be hurt and, knock on wood, I have never been knocked out. I thank God on that. Have I ever been rocked or dazed and stuff like that? Yes, I have, but anything could happen at any time. All it takes is landing the right punch and the punch that usually does it is the punch that you do not see. He throws big punches, but a lot of them you can see. So come Saturday night, anything may happen.

Question: Do you think a guy like Miguel Cotto belongs in the same ring as you and Tszyu?

Mitchell: I think Cotto is a good little fighter. I think he is coming up to be a great fighter, but to be mentioned in the same sense as with Tszyu and myself, not right at the moment, no.

Question: Do you envision yourself fighting him in the future?

Mitchell: Anything could happen. My focus is to do what I need to do on Saturday night and I think the sky is the limit after that.

Question: When you fought in August, Tszyu was at the arena and watched you from ringside. Did you guys have any interaction with each other?

Mitchell: No, we do not see each other. I did not even know he was there until they came and told me. **Question**: Is there a part of you that does not like the guy, or is it just business?

Mitchell: It is totally business with me. I am not going to dislike him. He has not done anything to me for me to dislike him. He has not done anything to my family or my kids or anything like that. That is when you get into the dislike thing.

Question: Was the knee that you injured in the first fight your left one?

Mitchell: Yes.

Question: Can you estimate how many times he actually threw you down to the mat in the first fight? And was it him throwing you, or was it a combination of him throwing you and your knee not holding up?

Mitchell: It was both him throwing me and my knee not being able to hold up. But I could not even tell you how many times I went down. I just know I went down and the times I went down were very hard on me and it just kind of took a toll.

Question: You have not been known as a big knockout puncher, but can you see yourself stopping Tszyu or is this going to be a typical nice tactical fight that Sharmba just wins and takes his opponent to school and wins a quality decision?

Mitchell: In my dreams, I envision two pictures. Sometimes, I am knocking him out and sometimes at the end of the fight I am holding my hands up and the referee announces the scores. But my thing is to go in there and win. Whether I knock him out or not does not make a difference.

Question: In the past, you talked about moving up in weight. Is it getting difficult for you to get the junior welterweight limit?

Mitchell: I have been at the junior welterweight limit forever. Gary and my management company have been keeping me busy, so I really do not have time to go eat as much. I love to eat. They keep me in training camp and eating all this good food all the time. I cannot get too fat. I am not able to do my burgers and stuff like I really love.

Question: Do you even contemplate losing?

Mitchell: No. Losing is a word that I never talk about.

Question: Do you have anybody in your camp similar to Tszyu in style that is helping you?

Mitchell: Shane Mosley is a big guy. He has that type of a style where he can keep that arm out there and shoot those shots and those shots are not coming lightly.

Question: This is your first fight in Phoenix, what are your comments?

Mitchell: I love the neutral site and like Phoenix. Phoenix is a place that I like to come to sometimes.

Question: Gary, you had your choice, why Phoenix? Second, why go outside (the state) to get the referee when we have quality referees here?

Shaw: This date is a Kostya Tszyu date with SHOWTIME. They controlled where the site was and they picked Arizona and Sharmba has always been willing to go. There was a time we were going to Australia, a time that we were going to Russia. When it came to Hatton and if that deal would have gone through, Sharmba was going to England. Sharmba's a world class fighter and he goes wherever he has to go for the riches, and I do not mean in money, but in the title and then proving that he is the best around. So they picked Arizona and we are showing up. Sharmba will walk away the champion. As far as the officials go, the officials are picked by the IBF and the local commission. They agreed on these officials and Sharmba and myself, we had no say in that at all.

Mitchell: I hope I see you all in Arizona and I hope that Arizona is good to me because I am going to be good to it. I will be the undisputed champion of the world.