

Sanders, Klitschko and the Titleist

Written by Rick Folstad
Friday, 23 April 2004 18:00

Corrie Sanders has the rare ability to play scratch golf on a Friday and knock a man silly in the boxing ring on a Saturday.

You get the feeling he's in the fight game only because it sometimes pays well and knocking out guys gives him something to do until he qualifies for the PGA Tour.

If they gave him a choice - if Sanders could blink and make things the way he wanted - he'd rather be walking down the 18th fairway at Augusta with a 2-stroke lead, waving to a polite gallery, then trotting out to a lighted boxing ring in front of 10,000 raving lunatics.

But that's the fight game, and Sanders is suddenly a big part of it whether he wants to be or not. He's a southpaw with quick hands and a big punch, and sometimes that takes you to places you're not sure you want to go.

The British Open will have to wait.

When Sanders (39-2, 29 KOs) faces Vitali Klitschko (33-2, 32 KOs) on Saturday night (HBO) at the Staples Center in Los Angeles, he better not be thinking about ways to improve his short game. This fight is for the WBC heavyweight championship and that title carries a certain amount of prestige. It beats winning the weekend club scramble.

Besides, the consequences for losing are a little steeper in the prize ring. You don't get a bloody nose for finishing four strokes back from the leader.

The loser of this fight is not expected to be around much past the eighth or ninth round. When heavy hitters like Klitschko (6-6, 245 pounds) and Sanders (6-4, 235) collide, it's usually a short night. Most predictions are for an early knockout, and it could be real ugly until that happens.

This is one of those times when you might want to think twice about switching to the NBA playoffs between rounds.

Of course, I once wrote that the Tommy Morrison - George Foreman fight would end early. I actually "promised" it wouldn't go the distance. But it did.

While Sanders would really like to win this one, he'll probably tee it up somewhere next week, win, lose or draw. He'll work on his driver and irons and dream about playing on tour. At 38, he's been tinkering in the fight game off and on for about 15 years, and his time is just about up. There are a lot of country clubs he'd still like to visit and conquer. He'd rather swing at a Titleist than a contender.

But for Klitschko, this fight means just about everything. He's fighting for redemption of the

Sanders, Klitschko and the Titleist

Written by Rick Folstad
Friday, 23 April 2004 18:00

battered Klitschko name; he's fighting to revenge his younger brother's KO loss to Sanders more than a year ago; and he's fighting to prove that the Klitschkos - or at least one of them - is the real thing following the Lamon Brewster upset of Wladimir.

So while Sanders may have stumbled into the heavyweight championship picture between rounds of golf, Vitali has always dreamed of some day winning the title. And that may work against him

A prediction? It's been a long time since a Klitschko went the distance.

Sanders in seven. I like upsets.