

Boxing South Africa: Darchinyan – Sikali Set for Clash Down Under

Written by Deon Potgieter
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South Africa and Australia have been archrivals for many years and whenever these two countries go up against each other in any sport there is added interest in what will transpire. Even though IBF flyweight world champion Vic Darchinyan is of Armenian decent, he now fights out of Australia, and when he climbs into the ring to defend his title on March 27 against South Africa's Mzukisi Sikali, there's going to be fireworks.

Sikali, the current IBO flyweight and former WBU junior fly and super flyweight world champion, is a seasoned professional who has come through the school of hard knocks to get where he is today. His scarred face and gritty looks reflect that he is by no means a man to take lightly - and it's unlikely that the champion would do so.

Darchinyan (22 wins with 17 KOs), who is trained by hall of famer Jeff Fenech, stopped the highly rated Irene Pacheco in 11 rounds to claim the crown on December 16 and will be looking to celebrate his newfound stardom in front of his "home-crowd" in Home Bush, New South Wales Australia.

Fenech is no stranger to South Africa and has brought a number of his charges to the southern most tip of the continent in hopes of furthering their careers. Many of them have been against boxers trained by Harold Volbrecht, who also trains Sikali. Fenech has not had much success against Volbrecht's charges, but that could all change with the Darchinyan–Sikali encounter.

Few local pundits give Sikali a chance against the champion. Although Sikali has always been respected, he is known to drift from the garden path on occasion and is not always totally committed to his fistic career. Sikali does, however, have an abundance of talent and possesses a huge arsenal, boasting almost every shot in the book. If he's fired up and remains focused he has the ability to upset anyone in the division.

To many people's surprise, Volbrecht, who battled to inspire Corrie Sanders in his clash with Vitali Klitschko, has had a tremendous influence on Sikali thus far, and this partnership looks to be one of those exceptional ones where trainer and boxer flourish in each other's company. Whether the 33-year-old Sikali (29 wins, 5 losses, 2 draws with 17 KOs), who is looking sharp in training, still has the legs to claim a fourth world title remains to be seen. The fact that he will be facing another southpaw in his quest will also add an interesting dimension to the fight.

Nobody likes fighting southpaws, especially other southpaws. Finding the perfect trainer to coach a southpaw to fight a southpaw, one need look no further than Volbrecht. He is a southpaw who twice challenged for the WBA welterweight world title and holds a national record for defending his South African welterweight title a total of 19 times. With more opportunities at the right times in his career there is no doubt he would have claimed a world title. Amongst his past charges of the have been former two-time junior lightweight world champion, Brian Mitchell, former two-time heavyweight world champion Corrie Sanders, former welterweight world champion Jan Bergman, and former two-time cruiserweight world champion Sebastian

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Rothman, to name a few.

Fenech also has a well documented pedigree, but in the end it matters little who sits in the corner, as it will be up to the two warriors in the middle of the ring who determine who takes this one. Both have 17 KOs to date and methinks this one will end with one of them having 18.