

Hot Fights, Summer in the City

Written by Robert Mladinich
Tuesday, 23 August 2005 19:00

It's "Hot Fights, Summer in the City" as promoter Lou DiBella continues his fistic renaissance in New York with a sensational card scheduled for Thursday, August 25, at the Hammerstein Ballroom.

For the uninitiated, the ballroom is located within the Manhattan Center at West 34th Street and Eighth Avenue, just one block from the fabled Madison Square Garden.

This card will take place in the main ballroom, rather than in one of the many makeshift arenas on the facility's upper floors. On a smaller scale, fighting there is akin to fighting in the big room at the Garden.

"This card warrants the big room," said DiBella who is calling the show "Broadway Boxing's Summer Bash." "It features four of the top prospects in the New York metropolitan area and not one of them is in a fight that is not extremely competitive."

Headlining the show will be Dmitriy "Star of David" Salita, 22-0 (13 KOs), of Brooklyn via the Ukraine, in an NABA welterweight championship bout against Shawn Gallegos, 15-1 (5 KOs), of Las Vegas, New Mexico. The fight is scheduled for ten rounds.

Junior welterweight Paulie Malignaggi, 19-0 (5 KOs), an Italian-American from Brooklyn, rebounds from hand surgery to battle Jeremy Yelton, 17-1 (9 KOs), of Charleston, South Carolina, in an eight-rounder.

Sechew "Iron Horse" Powell, 16-0 (10 KOs), of Brooklyn via Jamaica, takes on Santiago Samaniego, 36-9-1 (29 KOs), of Miami via Panama City, in a ten round bout. The well-traveled Samaniego is a first cousin of the legendary multi-division champion Roberto Duran.

Junior welterweight Edgar "El Chamaco" Santana, 14-2 (9 KOs), who was born in Puerto Rico but raised on the streets of Spanish Harlem, takes on late substitute Donnell Logan, 8-4-1 (4 KOs), of Covington, Tennessee.

"All of the local guys could conceivably lose," said DiBella. "One of the reasons for that is the boxing commission doesn't allow mismatches. Today you must have competitive fights. There is no more cowboys and Indians (mismatches) allowed."

Because of the fact that he is an Orthodox Jew, as well as a genuine prospect, Salita has been generating an inordinate amount of international attention. Moreover, he is his own best publicist. What makes him so endearing is the fact that he promotes himself without a trace of arrogance. He created his own website and works hard at establishing and maintaining relationships with fans and media types alike.

"Fighting so often in New York means the world to me," said Salita, who on the day of the final

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press conference, which was held on August 23 at Manhattan's Le Marais French Kosher restaurant on West 46th Street, was the subject of a front page story in *The Forward*, the leading international Jewish newspaper. "This fight has both local and worldwide significance for me. It is important because I have spent a good portion of my life in New York, but also because the city is the center of the world. What happens here is heard about everywhere."

Moreover, says Salita, "I am finally seeing the results of what I worked so hard for. When I started boxing it was just a dream to be a champion. Then I won the Golden Gloves and things have progressed at a slow but steady pace. Bit by bit, my dream is becoming a reality so that is very special to me."

Several years ago Santana was considered a good enough prospect to be signed by Felix Trinidad Sr. Unfortunately he found himself relegated to the backburner as Trinidad Sr. spent most of his time working with his championship caliber son.

The good-natured, immensely likeable Santana has no bad feelings toward either of the Trinidads, and even treasures the time he spent in their company. Sparring with Trinidad Jr. and learning what he did from the father, he says, were invaluable experiences.

His new manager, Ernesto Dallas, is young, ambitious, intelligent and seemingly on the fast track to success in his own right. He has not only created DVDs of Santana, which he distributes to the press, he has set up public workout sessions for him. As tireless as Santana is in the gym, he is even more tireless when it comes to meeting and greeting his legions of fans.

In New York's Puerto Rican community he has become a genuine sensation. Having Hector Roca as his new trainer will only enhance his popularity and reputation. An explosive slam-bang fighter by nature, Roca is trying to improve Santana's already formidable offensive arsenal as well as his sometimes questionable defensive abilities. Whether or not Roca is successful is yet to be seen—but one thing is certain: Santana is all action all the time.

"I love having fans of all ages," said the 25-year-old Santana. "I don't feel any pressure at all. Having all these people behind me just motivates me more to do better. I don't want to disappoint my fans and I don't want to disappoint myself."

An added attraction will be Hasidic reggae sensation Matisyahu, who will sing during Salita's ring walk. He will also play a short set immediately after the fights. The popular artist, who is about to embark on a U.S. tour, has been featured on *CNN* and profiled or reviewed in the *New York Times*

,
Los Angeles Times

,
Wall Street Journal, *Jerusalem Post*,
and
Montreal Gazette.

"When I was away at training camp with Sechew Powell and Edgar Santana, they laughed

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when I put his CD on,” said Salita. “But it was so great, the next day they asked me to put it on again.”

Doors open for the show at 6:00 P.M. and the fists start flying at 7:00 P.M. Call DiBella Entertainment at 212-947-2577 for tickets, which range from \$40 to \$200.