

Ramoni Wins in Dramatic Fashion

Written by Deon Potgieter

Monday, 19 September 2005 19:00

Simon Ramoni (26-7, 16 KOs) made the fifth successful defense of his South African junior bantamweight title in Nasrec Johannesburg on Friday night in a bout fought more in the style of heavyweights than junior bantamweights.

Ramoni, a former IBO bantamweight world champion, looked very well conditioned and muscular as he took on Khulile Makeba (21-1-5, 12 KOs), a former WBC international bantamweight champion, in an eagerly anticipated contest. Makeba also looked in good condition as he set about trying to dethrone the champion.

From the start of the fight both boxers moved around looking for a gap to land their big bombs and were wary of each other. Ramoni went down at the bell following a glancing blow from the challenger, but the referee ruled that it was a slip and not a knockdown.

The second round delivered some scintillating action as midway through the round Ramoni banged a solid left to Makeba's jaw which had spit flying. He followed up with two straight right jabs which landed square and the challenger was in serious trouble. Ramoni went after his man like a starving lion out for the kill and threw lefts and rights with wild abandon. Makeba himself kept throwing punches back in hope of surviving the onslaught. Against the flow of the action Makeba landed a beautiful straight left flush on Ramoni's jaw which dropped the champion. He rose to his feet and received a standing 8-count.

Ramoni came back strong in the third and landed his right jab with good effect. Makeba used this round to try and avoid the champion's blows and threw a few hooks in hopes of catching Ramoni again.

In the fourth round Makeba found his mark with a well-timed right hook which made the champion's jaw swivel as he dropped to the seat of his pants. The challenger tried but failed to finish off his man.

In the fifth round Makeba missed with a big right hook and Ramoni banged in a straight right to his temple which had the challenger down and out. It was an awesome blow and the challenger remained on his back for some time before rising to his feet. He seemed a little confused as to how Ramoni had managed to sneak in that blow.

"Makeba surprised me," said Ramoni after the fight "He dropped me twice and was a lot stronger than I expected. My trainer said I must take it easy because this guy will knock me out so I calmed down. He surprised me, but I'm still the champion. My dream now is to fight Hawk Makepula for his WBC international title."

While a Ramoni–Makepula contest would be hugely popular on the local front, the fact that Ramoni has now been dropped by 3 of the last 6 men he's faced doesn't bode well for the champion. He has shown great ability to come back from these visits to the canvas, but the

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Hawk is a vaunted puncher and given an open target of Ramoni's jaw he would clamp down on it and be the favorite in such a matchup.

On a tragic note: former IBO flyweight world champion Mzukisi Sikali, who held two wins over Makepula, was shot and killed in an armed robbery in Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape on Friday night. Sikali, a well schooled southpaw, previously also held the WBC international light flyweight, WBU light fly and super flyweight world titles, and the WBA international flyweight title. His last fight was in March when he made an unsuccessful bid to claim Vic Darchinyan's IBF flyweight world title in Australia.

Sikali (34) was a fine fighter, who had he been given better promotional support could have achieved a lot more than he had. He was one of the most underrated talents in the South African ring, someone who always had the ability to upset just about anybody. As with many talented boxers; he was prone to being a little erratic when it came to preparing for fights. He was one of the few boxers who was never protected in his matchmaking and was all the stronger for it as he knew his way around the ring and had a tremendous arsenal of punches. He certainly still had a lot to offer the sport both as a boxer and mentor and will sorely be missed by the boxing fraternity.

In other news following Sebastian Rothman's impressive performance against O'Neil Bell in their IBF cruiserweight world title clash, Rothman's promoter Rodney Berman is vying to set up a return contest to be staged in South Africa in November. Berman along with Cedric Kushner were the men behind staging Lennox Lewis-Hassim Rahman 1 in South Africa, so if Bell is willing to enter the lion's den, this could become a reality.

Rothman is keen on getting back in the ring with Bell and still carries the look of disappointment on his face at having got so close to claiming the IBF title and falling at the last hurdle.

Former 3-time world champion Dinga Thobela has reapplied for his boxing license. Having passed a medical test as well as a brain scan, Thobela is eager to get back in the ring. "I want to do a farewell tour" says Thobela "I'd like to have a fight in each of our 9 provinces so that the people who supported me throughout my career can get the opportunity to see me in the flesh ... and maybe we can throw another world title in there somewhere."

WBA intercontinental super middleweight champion Mpush Makambi has been earmarked as Thobela's first opponent should his license application be successful. Thobela hopes that claiming that crown could lead to a rematch with the WBA super middleweight king Mikkel Kessler. The two fought 3 years back for the vacant IBC super middleweight world title, with Kessler claiming a 12 round points decision. At the time Thobela predicted that Kessler would go on to claim one of the big three world titles, and now that he has "the Rose of Soweto" wants another shot at the big-hitting Dane.