

Nedzanani and Ndlovu win, Botha eyes Tua

Written by Deon Potgieter
Tuesday, 30 May 2006 19:00

Often the pressures of public expectation and promises of things to come if successful can weigh heavily on a boxer's mind when he enters the ring. This was the case on Friday night when Sizwe Sinyabi, 16-7-1 (9), lost an uninspiring 12-round decision to Muvhuso Nedzanani, 15-1-3 (9), in an eagerly awaited rematch at Nasrec arena in Johannesburg. The two were contesting the WBC international and South African national light flyweight titles.

In their first encounter some fifteen months ago Nedzanani defeated Sinyabi on a close points decision to dethrone him of the national title. Since then the champion has progressed and is certainly overdue to be thrown in against International opposition. Sinyabi has been breathing fire to get back in the ring with him to reclaim a title he felt he'd never lost in the first place.

Both of these men are promising boxers, Nedzanani wielding the bigger bombs and Sinyabi perhaps with more boxing skill. On this night, however, the fight always belonged to the champion and Sinyabi never looked to get out of the starting blocks. In all fairness the champion did land a bomb to Sinyabi's jaw in the first round, which shook him all the way to his toes. It looked momentarily as if he would go down. He dipped, the shock set in and he stayed on his feet.

From then on Sinyabi was weary of the champion's firing power and battled putting together a solid fight plan. He is shorter and has shorter reach than the champion and his only hope was beating him on the inside. But every time he managed to get close to Nedzanani he clinched. The challenger too does have a fair amount of power and during the course of the fight he did stagger the champion on three occasions. Each time however he failed to follow up and any advantage or opportunity he had of turning the fight around was thrown away.

As the fight progressed it looked as though Sinyabi's main concern was to see the fight through without getting hurt. As if he was saving himself for bigger things. There has been talk of a few International offers coming his way and perhaps that is where his focus was, instead of in the ring. Sinyabi took no chances and basically kept out of harm's way. Both these men were in prime physical condition and while that was pleasing, the fight itself was very disappointing.

Since their first encounter, which was eagerly contested and good entertainment, expectations have been mounting that the follow-up would be even more sensational. Admittedly it is sometimes difficult for fights to deliver on the hype. Remember the bore-fest which was Lewis – Tyson? This return did neither fighter any favours. A new title may have been won, but it certainly did not enhance either of their reputations. They are both better boxers than what they showed and hopefully now that this "personal grudge" match is out of the way, they will focus on their careers and hone their talents to reach the potential they both possess.

A boxer who has adapted very well to the pressures which come with expectations is Takalani Ndlovu. "The Panther" made easy work of Brazilian veteran Giovanni Andrade, 50-9 (40), last Thursday night at Carnival City in Brakpan. Ndlovu stopped his man 33 seconds into the second

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round with a beautifully placed left hook to the liver to successfully defend his IBO junior featherweight world title for a second time. Ndlovu, 26-3 (17), is one of the most promising talents in South African boxing at present. He has good hand-speed and fistic skills and has steadfastly improved and honed his talents as well as his temperament. Given the right opportunities we could be seeing a lot of this man in the future.

On the undercard of the Ndlovu – Andrade fight, Malcolm Klassen continued to impress by putting on an exhibition of his abilities while easily outpointing Willie Mabasa in defense of his national featherweight crown. Peter Mashamite stopped Patrick Simelane in the third round to claim the vacant national super middleweight title. Also at super middleweight, Daniel “Billy the Kid” Bruwer outpointed Argentina’s Luis Parade over 8 rounds after being dropped earlier in the fight. The disappointment of the night was undoubtedly national heavyweight champion Osborne Machimana’s ten round points loss to Poland’s Albert Sosnowski.

A heavyweight who is eager to get back into the fray of things is Francois “the White Buffalo” Botha, 44-4-2 (28). Negotiations are on for the former IBF heavyweight world champion’s return to boxing following a lucrative foray into K1 fighting. “I’ll keep fighting K1,” says Botha. “It’s a very exciting format and delivers great entertainment for fight fans. I’m an entertainer and I like entertaining people.” Botha may be back in the ring as early as August and among the names being bandied about as his come back opponent is former world title contender David Tua, 44-3-1 (38).

Unlike other boxers returning to the limelight, Botha does not want to face somebody that nobody’s ever heard of. “The winner of a fight between me and Tua would be pushed straight back into the world ratings and that’s where I want to be.” Says Botha “It would also be an opportunity for Tua to get back his contender status. After that fight, anything could happen for the winner.”

There has been a sport’s rivalry between South Africa and New Zealand, where Tua hails from, for over a century in rugby and cricket. If Botha – Tua comes off it could certainly be fuelled on by the one-upmanship which exists between the two countries. The return of these two could well add some much needed colour and spice to the heavyweight ranks.