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The man who rocked the heavyweight ranks by demolishing Wladimir Klitschko in two rounds to claim the WBO world heavyweight title in 2003 returns to action on Friday, November 24th. Corrie “The Sniper” Sanders, 40-3 (30), faces Australian heavyweight champion Colin Wilson, 32-18 (20), at the Mabatho Convention Center in his first fight following a two-year layoff.

“There are two reasons I'm coming back,” says Sanders. “The first is that I believe I've still got it. The heavyweight division is probably at its lowest ebb it’s ever been and frankly I don't see anybody out there who could beat me. I never took any serious punishment and I'm feeling strong. I've been inundated by people trying to convince me to return these last two years, saying that I could be world champion again, and looking at the current situation, yes, I think I could win the world title.”

Sanders last fight was on December 14, 2004 when he stopped Russian champion Alexei Varakin in two rounds in Germany. Varakin, like the younger Klitschko brother, visited the canvass in both the first and second rounds. Although Vitali Klitschko extracted a modicum of revenge by defeating Sanders in eight rounds to claim the WBC world heavyweight title in 2004, the South African southpaw feels Wladimir, who now holds the IBF version of the crown, would be interested in getting back in the ring with him personally.

“Of course,” insists Sanders, “I've got to take one step at a time. I first have to beat Wilson. But my goal is to win the world title again and to silence all my critics once and for all.” The Australian is one inch taller than the 6’4” Sanders and, like the South African, is also a southpaw, but has not faced the same caliber of opposition. “I've faced two or three southpaws myself and they are uncomfortable guys to fight,” says Sanders. “But once you’re in the ring, you soon learn how to handle them.”

You could be excused for thinking you’re seeing double when looking at Wilson's record. Although he's had 51 fights, he's only faced 17 different boxers, having faced most of his opponents more than once, including four fights against former WBF champion Bob Morovic and three fights against former world title contender Kali Meehan.

Another big name on his record is that of veteran Joe Bugner, who he met in 1998. But given his size and high knockout ratio he can't be taken lightly. “I've watched a video of one of his fights and he looks pretty handy in the ring,” Sanders says. “I don't expect him to give me any trouble, but if he does and if he gives me a hiding then obviously I'd have to accept that it’s the end of the road. I can't see that happening though. Losing is not an option. I'm feeling confident and good. Boxing is a mental game and I'm focused on winning. I did take the fight on short notice and have only had a few weeks to prepare so I'm not as fit as I would like to be, but I can definitely go 10 rounds if I have to. After this fight I'll be going into a training camp for three months and then I'll be ready to face anybody out there.”

The second reason Sanders is returning is unfortunately as a result of a sad tale which has

been told over and over in the sport since it started over a century ago. “My former manager, Vernon Smith, embezzled the majority of my finances from me,” says Sanders. “Prior to my WBC title fight against (Vitali) Klitschko, he conned me into giving him power of attorney. I didn't even know what I was signing. I thought he was my friend. I trusted him. He's basically stolen 18 million rands (+/- 6.5 million US dollars) from me. We're pursuing legal action against him, but he's ducking and diving us on every front. To date I haven't even seen the Klitschko contract which we are trying to get from him. Basically, this guy’s a bastard who I have absolutely no respect for.”

Helping Sander's in his corner come fight night is former heavyweight contender Johnny Du Plooy. Sanders defeated Du Plooy at the tail end of the charismatic boxer's career to claim the SA heavyweight title. “Johnny's a great guy.” says Sanders. “There's no hard feelings or issues and we are working well together.” Following this fight Sanders will also be teaming up again with his former trainer Harold Volbrecht. “I've got a lot of respect for Harold and the only reason he's not onboard already is because he's out of the country at present. I'll be working with both Harold and Johnny as we work our way back to a world title.”

“The only guy who looks like the real deal amongst the current crop of heavyweight world champions is Wladimir Klitschko,” says James Muleleka of White Velvet promotions, who is promoting the Sanders – Wilson fight, “and Corrie beat him. There's no reason why he can't be at the top of the hill right now.” Sanders has always been too honest for his own good and even though he believes he can clean up the heavyweight division, he admits candidly that if it was not for the Vernon affair he wouldn't be making a comeback. “I've never been a big fan of fighting, but God gave me a talent and that's basically all I know how to do,” says Sanders. “I'm not a jack of all trades. I'm a boxer and that's what I do best.”

Former IBF super bantamweight kingpin Lehlo Ledwaba, 36-5-1 (23), will be in action in the main supporting bout when he defends his WBA Pan-African super featherweight title against little known Ghanaian fighter Maxwell Awuku. “I've been very frustrated,” says Ledwaba. “I'm the kind of fighter who likes to keep busy, but the fights have been slow in coming.” Ledwaba won the title in April when he stopped Ephraim Nangenda in 8 rounds.

Given his previous stature Ledwaba would be a natural choice as a challenger for Malcolm Klassen's IBF super featherweight world title, but the factor of rival promoters handling the various fighters has always been a stumbling block in making local superfights. These bouts only tend to happen when both fighters are handled by the same promoter. Besides holding the IBF title with distinction, until losing it to Manny Pacquiao, Ledwaba also held the WBU bantam- and featherweight world titles.