

Will Simms/Alcine Be A Classic?

Written by Robert Mladinich
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Contrary to what many boxing insiders might think, former light heavyweight title challenger and New England boxing fixture John "Iceman" Scully wishes WBA super welterweight champion Travis Simms, 25-0 (18 KOs), the best of luck when he puts his title on the line against undefeated Joachim "Ti-Joa" Alcine, 28-0 (18 KOs), a native of Haiti who fights out of Montreal, in Bridgeport, Connecticut, on Saturday, July 7.

The Simms-Alcine bout will headline the Showtime televised doubleheader that is being promoted by Don King. In the co-feature, undefeated IBF flyweight champion Vic "Raging Bull" Darchinyan, 28-0 (22 KOs), a native of Armenia who fights out of Sydney, Australia, will take on Nonito "The Filipino Flash" Donaire, 17-1 (10 KOs).

The four headliners have a combined record of 98-1 (68 KOs).

It would be easy for people to believe that Scully and Simms have a searing animosity toward one another. When the now 36-year-old Simms, who fights out of nearby Norwalk, Connecticut, was preparing for Jose Antonio Rivera, who is trained by Scully, for the same title that Simms once held, he (Simms) implied to the press that he had been an alternate on the 1996 Olympic team.

Scully, who hails from New Windsor, Connecticut, and was a highly touted amateur, and fairly successful pro fighter, and is currently a superb trainer and television analyst, knew that wasn't true. He wound up bombarding the Internet with stories detailing the inaccuracy, which caused quite a rift between the two residents of the Nutmeg State. The rift could have been exacerbated after Simms looked sensational in stopping Rivera in the ninth round to win back his title in Hollywood, Florida, on January 6, 2007.

Instead, Scully congratulated Simms on his splendid performance and the two have since become friends again.

"I don't know how that story got started, but it wasn't true," said Scully, who admits to exploiting the fabrication to get under the skin of Simms and attempting to give Rivera a psychological advantage.

But, he adds, "I consider myself somewhat of a historian, so I also wanted the truth to be known. David Reid was the 1996 Olympian and Darnell Wilson was the alternate. As disappointed as Darnell probably was, being an Olympic alternate is a source of pride. It was probably a big moment in his life.

"That's his spot in history and I wanted to set the record straight," he continued. "He (Simms) could be my best friend in the world, or even my worst enemy. That still doesn't change the fact that he was not an Olympic alternate."

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Scully concedes that the rumor might have been started by a little white lie or even an exaggeration that snowballed out of control. But, he says, Simms is a very talented fighter whose future appears limitless, especially if he scores a sensational knockout over Alcine.

“Even though Travis is 36, he’s well preserved,” said Scully. “He reminds me a little of Bernard Hopkins, Winky Wright and Glen Johnson in the way he takes care of himself. He’s a young 36.”

Scully, as astute a student of the game as you’ll ever meet, believes that, as sensational as Simms looked against Rivera, he might have his hands full with Alcine.

“This is the first guy he’s really fighting who is in his prime,” he explained. “When Travis fought Bronco McKart (in October 2004), Bronco had already lost three times to Winky (Wright). It was a good win (by decision) for Travis, but Bronco was past his prime.”

Scully believes that although Simms has been a pro for ten years, he is not all that seasoned. He attributes that to lots of inactivity, especially during Simms’s well documented promotional disputes and wrangling with sanctioning bodies.

For reasons too complicated to explain here, Simms “lost” the title he won with a sensational fifth round knockout of Alejandro Garcia in Atlantic City in December 2003. Rivera then “won” the title that Simms proclaimed all along was rightfully his.

If the 31-year-old Haitian/Canadian Alcine is primed, Scully believes the fight could be a war and the winner will find himself in an enviable position. Lucrative paydays against the likes of Floyd Mayweather or Oscar De La Hoya would loom on the horizon.

“There is a lot on the line in this fight,” said Scully. “If someone scores a highlight reel type knockout, they will be in a great position. If the fight goes to a dull decision, they’re screwed.”

Scully has a lot of respect for Alcine’s handlers, Howard and Otis Grant, the latter of whom once fought Roy Jones Jr. He knows that they would not be bringing a pushover to Bridgeport. That said, his gut tells him the fight will be a barnburner for as long as it lasts.

“Alcine has fought a lot of tough guys, plus he has speed and (relative) youth on his side,” said the Iceman. “He’s also got good people with him. They know that he has to make a statement. Travis knows the same thing. I know this fight won’t be one-sided, and I believe the winner will gain a lot of respect.”

Simms has stated that he is going to “murder” Alcine. He said that Alcine has a propensity to be dropped, but credits him with having the resilience to come back and win. Still, he insists, if Alcine is able to withstand his punching power, “he’s going to take a terrible ass whooping.”

Simms also berated Alcine by saying he built his impressive record against D level fighters while he (Simms) “fought sparring partners tougher than him.”

Alcine was non-plussed by all the chest beating.

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"This is the opportunity of a lifetime," said Alcine, who hopes to become the first Haitian to ever win a world title. "I am a sneaky guy. I can fight with anybody, and it doesn't matter what style."

Among the better known fighters he has stopped are Carlos Bojorquez, Stephane Ouellet and Marco Avendano.

"This guy is no joke," said Scully. "Neither is Simms. I'm hoping this fight lives up to its potential because it could be a classic."

Like most boxing insiders, Scully is very high on Darchinyan. With Manny Pacquiao bringing so much positive attention to the lighter weight classes, Scully believes that Darchinyan has genuine star appeal.

"So many mainstream people tuned into the De La Hoya-Mayweather fight to see what all the hoopla was about," said Scully. "They came away disappointed. It's not going to be easy to win them back or fool them again."

But, he adds, the enormous popularity of Pacquiao, even among mainstream fans, can only help a standout performer like Darchinyan who is all action all the time.

"He's real rugged and fun to watch," said Scully. "If he steps up to the plate and looks as good as he usually does, he could catch on. Everyone loves punchers and offensive minded fighters. He certainly is all that."

Tickets are still available for the fights, which will take place at the Arena at Harbor Yard, 600 Main Street, Bridgeport, Connecticut 06604. Doors open on Saturday at 5:00 P.M. and the fights begin at 5:05. The Showtime broadcast begins at 9:00 P.M. with Darchinyan-Donaire.