

Grinning Goossen

Written by Raymond Markarian
Monday, 08 November 2010 19:00

Dan Goossen seems to be a happy man these days. Not sure if it is because two of his fighters, Paul Williams and Andre Ward are going to be fighting this month, or if he just enjoys this rainy California weather. But the head man of Goossen Tutor Promotions was in a perky mood when I spoke with him over the phone this past weekend.

Our first topic of discussion was Showtime's decision to sign the highly regarded super middleweight Lucian Bute to a three fight contract, a move that Goossen was very fond of by the way. Perhaps Goossen sees dollar signs in his eyes as he envisions an ultimate showdown between Andre Ward and Lucian Bute, after Ward takes care of business in the Super Six Tournament of course.

The Super Six Boxing Classic started off as a revolutionary concept that pitted six of the best 168 pound fighters against each other in a round robin type of tournament. But after two rounds of action were completed, half of the participants pulled out because of injury. What were left in the tournament were three original contestants and three replacements, and a whole lot of unhappy fight fans. But the most glaring omission from the Super Six from the beginning was the undefeated Lucian Bute, who fought his last three fights on Showtime's rival network, HBO.

The moment news broke out last week that the Canadian agreed to display his boxing skills on Showtime. The negative energy that was surrounding the Super Six turned into an apparent light at the end of the tunnel. Goossen put his normal promoters twist on the Bute signing but had some interesting things to say about Bute and Andre Ward.

"I think that it is always good to have targeted challenges under one roof, he said. "But it is way too immature to declare Bute to be a potential opponent. He has to take care of business with what he is doing. And we have to take care of business ourselves.

The Goossen side of the business is Andre Ward's attempt to win the Super Six Tournament, which continues with his November 27th bout against Sakio Bika in Oakland, California. Ward has taken plenty of criticism for being an apparent hometown fighter. He is the only fighter in the Super Six that has fought all of his bouts at home in Oakland. Goossen reminds us that he has an agreement in place between him and the other promoters in the Super Six to have Ward fight his first three fights at home.

But Ward made it clear that he was willing to go on the road and fight outside of California. He was supposed to fight Andre Dirrell, his original opponent on November 27th at a neutral location. The Hard Rock Hotel in Las Vegas was being discussed. But last month Dirrell officially pulled himself out of the Super Six because a neurological injury and Bika took his place.

With so little time to get a promotion together, Goossen says he did not have many other alternatives but to stay in Oakland for Ward's fight against Bika.

“The Super Six is a great concept and we love being a part of it. Despite the obstacles it has faced, it will still be a powerful tournament when it is all said and done. But the difference is that when you really get down to the day in and day out as a promoter, you are in essence just promoting an event. When you are promoting you are not thinking about how many points are being built up in the tournament. You are just thinking of a fight, and fighting for the championship. It is great that we are already being guaranteed a position in the semifinals of the Super Six. Having the unfortunate position of Dirrell unable to move forward, has really put us in a unique position.

The potential Ward versus Dirrell clash had boxing fans buzzing for months. But when Dirrell pulled out of the fight and the tournament for that matter, people began to question the legitimacy of Dirrell’s injury. Ward and Dirrell were Olympic teammates in 2004, and thought to be great friends. Therefore the majority of the media and boxing fans alike felt that Dirrell faked his injury so he would not have to throw punches against his friend. I wrote an article last month about the level of friendship between Andre Ward and Andre Dirrell, which is not as strong as people generally believe.

About Dirrell and his inability to fight, Goossen says, “I believe that fighters are the toughest people in the world. It takes a lot for one of the great athletes to take a step back. Andre Dirrell is a very talented fighter. It is a shame that he is unable to perform at this point. No one knows how quickly he could come back, but one would hope that he would.

On Ward fighting in Oakland again, the promoter said, “It is out of my control, (what people say). Andre has a great fan base in Oakland. Because of the circumstances of this fight, we had to make a fairly quick decision. Oakland was a great choice. I’d love to have him fight in Vegas, Atlantic City, or the Staples Center. My goals as much as Andre’s is to have him fight in Staples, Mandalay Bay, or the MGM, I think he could sell them out.”

On the potential of Andre Ward, Goossen said, “Andre Ward is a unique person. A lot of people think he is not going to be marketable without him throwing chairs around and making a fool of himself. I believe he is going to make classy fashionable. I believe he is going to be an athlete that people and fans from not only boxing, but other sports try to emulate. I think it is great that we have such a great athlete, with a good foundation, and he just happens to be one of the baddest asses on the planet.

SAN LEANDRO, Calif. (Nov. 9, 2010) – Andre “S.O.G. Ward met with members of the local Bay Area press on Tuesday to discuss defending his World Boxing Association (WBA) super middleweight championship a second time against tough world contender Sakio “The Scorpion Bika (28-4-2, 19 KOs) of Sydney, Australia, via Douala, Cameroon, on Saturday, Nov. 27, live on SHOWTIME.

“Mentally, I was preparing to fight Andre Dirrell, said Ward who also met with his fans, mingling and signing autographs from Ricky’s Sports Theatre and Grill. “It was never our intention to not partake in the fight with Dirrell. But when it came down to the training we didnt have to make a

Grinning Goossen

Written by Raymond Markarian
Monday, 08 November 2010 19:00

lot of adjustments because we hadn't begun camp yet.

With a berth in the semifinals of the SHOWTIME Super Six World Boxing Classic already secured, Ward will return home to the Oracle Arena in Oakland where he has fought and won three of his last four fights.

The World Championship night of boxing will begin at 4 p.m. featuring undefeated Jr. middleweight and 2008 US Olympian Javier Molina (4-0, 4 KOs), Sacramento's undefeated lightweight Stan Martyniuk (10-0, 1KO), Houston's power-punching Cornelius White (15-0, 14 KOs), plus four other bouts with the main event featuring Oakland's finest starting at approximately 7 p.m.

Tickets are priced at \$150, \$75 and \$35 are on sale now at the Oracle Box Office or visit www.coliseum.com or www.ticketmaster.com.

Goossen Tutor Promotions and TNT Boxing are promoting this night of World Championship boxing, with the championship bout in association with Golden Boy Promotions, the promoter for Bika.

Here's what Ward and his promoter Dan Goossen had to say on Tuesday.

ANDRE WARD:

There have been many twists and turns but we are still here and ready for our next opponent.

We have a good plan we started out on the tournament and we plan to see it through.

On whether Ward gets frustrated with the delays in the SSWBC Tournament:

I sometimes get a little impatient because I want it to move forward. It gets frustrating but SHOWTIME and Goossen Tutor Promotions keep working to continue with the tournament and I have to recognize and applaud their perseverance.

His plan against Bika:

I am going to do what I do except a little bit better. Sakio has never been stopped. It would be great to get a stoppage in this fight.

Bika will come full steam ahead with wild punches. I am going to continue to do what I do and that is a little bit of everything. Just like when I fought (Allan) Green. We had a plan to fight on the inside but it ended up being a closed combat and I had to adjust. With Bika, depending on what he does I'll know how to adjust and what I need to do.

Im not going to call him (Bika) a dirty fighter but he tends to get frustrated and react. I know to expect that.

Grinning Goossen

Written by Raymond Markarian
Monday, 08 November 2010 19:00

On whether or not Ward believes Bika to be the same fighter as when he fought Lucian Bute:

“Sakio Bika is the same fighter as when he fought Lucian Bute. His fighting style has awarded him a lot of merit and respect for his grittiness.

Where Andre Ward believes himself to be as a fighter at 26 years of age:

I have a lot of work to do. I've always been in the mind set of striving for more. I can fight a good fight and then get a call from Virgil (Hunter) telling me that I did good but I can do more. Its good that there is always room to do more -- its good because it keeps me striving. The best is yet to come.

DAN GOOSSEN:

Its all about what Ward does. He puts in the work and is one of the hardest working fighters that Ive had and Ive had some hard working fighters!