

Silence is Golden in South African Boxing

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Every now and again a boxer comes along who exudes charm, charisma and talent which sets him apart from the pack. These boxers are gems and if well handled become the stuff of legends. Such a man is Silence Mabuza.

Although he currently holds the lowly regarded IBO bantamweight world title, Mabuza has championship material written all over him and would be a serious contender for any of the more recognized world titles. He is undefeated with 15 of his 17 bouts ending via the short route.

Mabuza's last bout was a thrill a minute affair against the hard as nails Pilipino fighter Eric Barcelona on November 20th at Carnival City in Brakpan, South Africa. Both boxers went at each other with speed and tenacity for the full twelve rounds, their arms pumping like well-oiled machines. Barcelona put up a formidable display. Had he been in the ring with a less skilled opponent, he would have walked away a deserving winner.

The Mabuza-Barcelona bout was a strategic affair and there was little to choose between these two warriors. The main deciding factor was Mabuza's ability to think on his feet and to alternate his attacks on his more one-dimensional opponent. Mabuza was also the stronger of the two. While neither fighter visited the canvas, Mabuza did stagger Barcelona in sixth, ninth and twelfth rounds, and were it not for the bell or the ropes providing a reprieve for the brave challenger, he most surely would have gone down.

South Africa has produced a number of world-class bantamweights, including the likes of Willie Smith, who in the 1920s beat Teddy Baldock for what was billed as a world title fight, Olympic gold medal winner Laurie Stevens, as well as universal bantamweight world champion Viccie Toweel and his brother Willie, who fought a draw with Robert Cohen for the same title a few years later.

There was South African Arnold Taylor, who won the WBA bantamweight world title, and Jake Tuli, an Empire champion and number one contender, who never received a world title opportunity. There were of course many others along the way, but the aforementioned names are boxers who are mentioned when the debates of top-ten South African boxers of all time hits the table.

While Mabuza has not yet earned the right to be included in that discussion, he certainly has the ability to get there and has the potential of becoming one of the greatest in the current division. "The IBF, WBA or WBC, bring them all on," said Mabuza's trainer, Nic Durand, following his charge's impressive victory over Barcelona. "We're ready to take on any of the other champions – if they dare!"