

Courtney Burton returns on Showtime Boxing

Written by News Article

Sunday, 12 December 2004 18:00

Multi-talented boxer and musician, Ebo Elder, will put down his drum sticks and pick up the gloves when he defends his North American Boxing Organization (NABO) lightweight crown against former NABO champion Courtney Burton, Friday, Dec. 17, on the SHOWTIME boxing series, "ShoBox: The New Generation." In the 10-round co-feature, unbeaten World Boxing Organization (WBO) No. 15 junior welterweight contender "Mighty" Mike Arnaoutis will make his third SHOWTIME and "ShoBox" appearances as he takes on Juaquin "Killer" Gallardo.

SHOWTIME will televise the Gary Shaw Productions doubleheader from the Chumash Casino Resort in Santa Ynez, Calif., at 11 p.m. ET/PT (tape delayed on west coast). The telecast represents the 54th in the popular "ShoBox" series, which debuted on SHOWTIME in July 2001. This marks the fifth time this year "ShoBox" has been to Chumash.

Elder (21-1, 13 KOs), of Newnan, Ga., captured the vacant NABO lightweight title on Oct. 9, 2004, by scoring a sixth-round technical knockout over Ricardo Fuentes in Gainesville, Ga. The referee halted the contest following the fifth round due to facial injuries. In addition to suffering several cuts on both eyelids, Fuentes' right eye turned purple and was nearly swollen shut at the time of the stoppage.

After opening his career with 16 consecutive victories, 10 knockouts and two pro titles, Elder traded in his pugilistic skills to become the drummer of a rock band and construction worker. The career change was spurred on by a devastating opening-round TKO loss to Ubaldo Hernandez in a bout for the North American Boxing Association (NABA) 140-pound belt on Nov. 10, 2001.

Due to burnout caused by fighting 17 times in 17 months, and having undergone intense internal conflict with his father/manager/trainer, Greg, Elder would not enter the ring for more than two years.

Following a 26-month layoff, Elder returned with a renewed commitment to boxing and an improved relationship with his father.

"Everything is completely different and I have the confidence to know that it is going to stay that way," Elder told Fightnews.com in July 2004. "This is how things should have been all of those other years before. The only thing that can stop us now is if God says, 'that's enough.'"

Since his return in January 2004, Elder has gone 5-0 with three knockouts and appeared twice before a national television audience on ESPN's "Friday Night Fights." The Georgia native currently is the World Boxing Council (WBC) No. 6/WBO No. 13/International Boxing Federation (IBF) and World Boxing Association (WBA) No. 14 lightweight contender.

Prior to the layoff, Elder captured the vacant International Boxing Association (IBA) Continental 140-pound crown by registering a 12-round unanimous decision over Jaime Morales on July 28,

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2001, in Savannah, Ga. Two months later on "ShoBox," Elder added the vacant WBO Intercontinental super lightweight title to his resume with a sixth-round technical win over Dagoberto Najera on Sept. 29, 2001.

Burton (21-2, 11 KOs), of Benton Harbor, Mich., secured the NABO lightweight championship with a 12-round split decision over Francisco Lorenzo on Dec. 5, 2003, from St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. Two judges had Burton winning 115-114 and 116-113, while the third judge gave the nod to Lorenzo, 115-113.

After turning pro at age 18 in July 1996, the three-time Silver Gloves United States champion and a two-time Junior Olympic U.S. National champion defeated his initial 16 opponents. In his 17th outing and pro title debut, Burton lost for the first time when Eleazar Contreras scored a fifth-round knockout and won the WBC Continental Americas lightweight title on Nov. 7, 2002, in New Orleans.

An unfazed Burton rebounded in 2003 to defeat former world champions Gabriel Ruelas and Angel Manfredy, as well as Lorenzo en route to compiling a 4-0 record with three KOs. Following a hard-fought 11th-round TKO loss to Julio Diaz in an IBF 135-pound elimination bout on March 19, 2004, Burton tallied a 10-round split decision over Emanuel Augustus on July 6, 2004. The Michigan native currently is the World Boxing Association (WBA) No. 5 and IBF No. 6 lightweight contender.

Arnautis (11-0-1, 5 KOs), of Athens, Greece, floored Jesse Feliciano three times in the initial three minutes to nab the vacant NABO junior welterweight title with an opening-round knockout Oct. 22, 2004, on "ShoBox" from Chumash Casino Resort.

The unbeaten champion sent Feliciano to the canvas for the first time midway through the first round by landing a punishing uppercut to the chin. Less than one minute later, Feliciano hit the turf once again after absorbing brutal body shots to the midsection. After Feliciano stumbled while regaining his feet, Arnautis ended matters when a crushing left to the head sent the beaten fighter down for a third time. Referee Dr. James Jen Kin stopped the carnage at 2:49 of the opening stanza.

In his "ShoBox" and SHOWTIME debuts, Arnautis fought to an electrifying 12-round majority draw against Juan Urango for the vacant NABO junior welterweight crown on Aug. 5, 2004, from Hollywood, Fla. Arnautis, 25, went 103-7 with 68 knockouts in the amateurs and won numerous Greek titles. He turned pro at age 21 on April 30, 2001, with a four-round decision over Sergiy Dolmatov.

Gallardo (16-2-1, 5 KOs), of San Diego, Calif., native compiled a 173-11 amateur record and captured numerous titles, including the National Silver Gloves title from 1989-93. A National P.A.L. champion, Gallardo also won the National Junior Olympic silver medal in '92, the National Junior Olympic gold in '93 and the U.S. Olympic Festival gold in '94. Gallardo began his professional boxing career at age 20 on Sept. 19, 1997, with a four-round victory over Alphonso Meza in Tacoma, Wash.

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“Killer” has won his last two bouts entering his “ShoBox” debut: a brilliant eighth-round knockout over Sergio de la Torre in San Francisco Dec. 13, 2003 and a 10-round decision over Arturo Morua in Temecula, Calif. April 17, 2004.

Nick Charles will call the action from ringside, with Steve Farhood serving as expert analyst. The executive producer of the telecast is Gordon Hall, with Richard Gaughan producing.