

Boxing in Thailand and a Little Bit More

Written by Scott Mallon

Tuesday, 13 December 2005 19:00

December 5, 2005

Royal Garden, Bangkok, Thailand

One of the most important and sentimental holidays of the year in Thailand is December 5th. It's a day for Thais to celebrate the birthday of the country's long-reigning and beloved King Bhumipol and also a day filled with boxing and Muay Thai. King Bhumipol has reigned in Thailand for 59 years and turned 78 this year.

For the past nine years, One Songchai Promotions has promoted shows featuring some of the world's finest Muay Thai fighters and also some of Thailand's best up-and-coming boxers. Each year, without fail, a crowd swells to nearly one hundred thousand at the Royal Garden to watch bouts that go from early afternoon until the wee hours of the morning.

Former WBA super featherweight champion Yodsanan Sor Nanthachai (46-3-1, 36 KOs) outclassed 140 lb. Filipino champion Bart Abapo (16-4-2, 11 KOs) in a workmanlike effort en route to winning a unanimous six-round decision. The 35-year-old Sor Nanthachai showed good defensive skills and by round three was walking through the punches of Abapo. In the fourth stanza he dropped Abapo with a short right hook; in the sixth a barrage of punches led to another knockdown and only the bell saved Abapo. All three judges scored the bout 60-52.

There are rumors Sor Nanthachai may face Venezuelan knockout artist Edwin Valero in the near future, but at this stage nothing has been confirmed. The Thai is known for having an excellent chin and Valero is known for his terrific KO power. Sor Nanthachai has the experience; Valero has youth plus a record 17 straight first-round knockouts to his credit. Sor Nanthachai surprisingly lost his title back in April in a war against Vincent Mosquera and looks to try and regain it sometime next year.

In the co-main event, Thailand's Chonlatarn Piriypinyo (12-0, 5 KOs) coasted to a twelve-round unanimous decision over Jeffrey Onate (29-21-6, 16 KOs) of the Philippines to retain his Asian Boxing Council Featherweight title for the seventh time. By the end of the twelve-round bout both the eyes of Onate were swollen and nearly shut. The loss is the fourth in a row for Onate. All three judges scored the bout 120-108.

December 6, 2005

The Mall Shopping Center, Ngamwongwan, Nonthaburi, Thailand

Former WBA and WBC bantamweight champion Veerapol Nakornluang (52-2-2, 36 KOs) made quick work of veteran Rey Llagas (57-27-3, 37 KOs), using a rapid-fire body attack to absolutely obliterate the Filipino before he could even get started. The end came from one, well-placed punch to the stomach at 2:19 of the second round.

The 37-year-old Sahaprom is hoping to regain the title he defended 14 times and held for seven

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years. Sahaprom lost the title by a close unanimous decision to Japan's Hozumi Hasegawa and a rematch in 2006 is eagerly anticipated.

Napapol Kiattisakchokchai squared off against Tanzanian Francis Miyeyusho in the co-main event and they wasted no time getting down to business. Both fighters came out on a mission in round one and it seemed doubtful the fight would go the distance. Miyeyusho (15-3-1, 5 KOs) looked to have the edge in hand speed and for the first two minutes of the round got the better of the exchanges. But at the end of the round Kiattisakchokchai (34-2, 30 KOs) landed a straight to the head of the lanky African that had his spindly legs doing the funky chicken.

In round two Kiattisakchokchai aggressively cut the ring off, forcing Miyeyusho against the ropes where he reeled off body shot after body shot. A right hook to the body dropped Miyeyusho, who gamely rose at the count of eight. Miyeyusho had no answer for the powerful attack of Kiattisakchokchai; an accumulation of punches, followed by two shots on the beltline, floored Miyeyusho once again. Although seemingly wide-eyed and capable of getting up, he sat through the ten-count and the fight was called at 2:48 of round two.

Kiattisakchokchai is currently the WBC # 2 ranked super bantamweight, one spot ahead of fellow countryman Saenghiran Lookbanyai.

BEFORE TAKING UP permanent residence in the Big Mango (Bangkok), I called Southern California my home. I was extremely fortunate to have a boss who had season tickets to the Great Western Forum in Los Angeles and was usually too busy to use them. I was always given the tickets via courier at the last minute, but it didn't matter. I'd always make the two hour drive because I knew that while many of the boxers who fought at the Forum were unknowns, the place had a reputation for staging battles between tough Latino fighters.

Agapito Sanchez dropped a majority decision to Guty Espada in early 1998 and while I have long since forgotten the specifics of the fight, I always remembered his determination and his name. The he took on Juan Manuel Marquez, Cesar Soto, Freddie Norwood, Javier Jauregui, Guty Espada, Nestor Lopez and Oscar Larios. He certainly didn't shy away from a tough fight and it's too bad more fighters aren't more like him.

The years passed and after his draw with Manny Pacquiao I lost track of him. Then I heard he was fighting Artyom Simonyan. He was out of sight but not out of mind and I didn't forget what a tough, gritty fighter he was, so when I found out Simonyan was the favorite, I put a few hundred bucks on Sanchez. It came as no surprise to me when he knocked out Simonyan in five. Thanks Agapito. R.I. P.

I GREW UP in South Miami when South Beach was only a beach and Ft. Lauderdale had yet to be tamed. As a young boy I poured over the sports pages of the Miami Herald on a daily basis, reading about any and all sports. The name Pat Putnam stuck with me over the years and when I first began writing for The Sweet Science I was damn proud to be writing on the same site as he was.

A few weeks ago out of the blue, I received an email from the venerable Pat Putnam himself.

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When I got his email I hurriedly opened it to find out why the boxing poet would be emailing me. Much to my surprise it seemed he was a fan of my efforts and simply wanted to tell me to keep up the good work. Needless to say, that email made my day. In subsequent weeks we continued to exchange emails and I feel fortunate to have gotten to know him if only just a little. His first email is now framed and on the wall in my office.

"Except for the two guys inside the ropes, I would have packed it in a long time ago, but since we are the only guys between them and THEM, I couldn't do it." – Pat Putnam