

Boxing in Asia: Christmas in Thailand

Written by Scott Mallon

Sunday, 24 December 2006 19:00

Even in Thailand, Santa makes the rounds. Although most Thais are Buddhists, Christmas is practiced with fervor. As in the west, gifts are exchanged and lights are hung, Christmas music is played and in some cases, trees are erected and decorated. In Thailand, the Christmas season is in full swing for the entire month of December.

My own kids, who are six and four, have not been immune to the spirit of Christmas either.

Thus, it should have come as no surprise when my oldest son asked his mother if he could call Santa. Somehow, he had managed to find Santa's direct number.

"Sure," she said, nudging me. And off to my office I went. I locked the door, turned down the television and waited for their call.

A few moments later, the chirping of my cell phone sent me into full Santa mode. I answer and hear both of my sons on the other end of the line, giggling uncontrollably. Their voices are shaking with excitement and disbelief.

"Hello Santa, this is Alex," shouts the older of the two.

"And this is Nicholas," his younger brother stated.

"Hello little ones," I say, in my best Santa's voice. "Have you been good little boys?"

"Yes Santa, yes!"

"What would you like for Christmas?" I ask. "Perhaps some old copies of Ring Magazine? Some autographed photos of Rocky Marciano or Muhammad Ali? Can I get you tickets to a fight in Vegas?"

There is silence. Apparently, Santa is confusing them.

"Would you like a photo of Jose Sulaiman to throw darts at? Or maybe Gilberto Mendoza?"

Slightly irritated, Alex decides to let it all hang out, "Santa – my daddy doesn't like those guys and neither do I. We want toys!"

"Santa is well aware boxing is in need of a major overhaul. He knows, as many others do, boxing is run by men who some might even call criminals. You must give it time though – they will hang themselves eventually. Just give them enough rope."

"Huh? What are you talking about Santa, I want a robot," states Alex, now trying to take control of the situation. "Are you really Santa Claus?"

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I continue on, content to hear myself speak, "Do you know what a world champion really is?"

"Santa – c'mon, can we get to our lists?" asks Alex.

"First let me tell you. A world champion is someone who earns their way to the top by beating the best fighters in his division – not by getting it handed to him or by winning some worthless belt."

"Santa!"

"It's tough for a fighter to become a true champion nowadays because there's nearly a hundred weight divisions and fifty different so-called championships. To tell you the truth, I've lost track of them.

"Everybody knows boxing's in the sh – oops, the toilet, but nobody can do anything about it... yet. So the charade continues. In the old days..."

"Santa!" screams Alex, desperate to pass on his request for gifts.

Nicholas pipes in defiantly, "Santa, I want a computer and some videos – and a remote controlled car."

They quickly rattle off what is on their lists. Remote controlled cars, CD's, videos, Ultraman Laser Gun, Ultraman T-shirts, Ultraman this, Ultraman that – these kids have high expectations of Santa.

Apparently, they aren't aware of Santa's tight schedule. Fortunately, their mother knows what Santa is expected to bring. Sometimes Santa has a hard time remembering what he had for breakfast, much less two kids' ever changing, need for toys.

"As long as you are good little boys, Santa will try and bring you everything you want. Now where was I – oh, about the champions. As I was saying..."

"Santa, we've got to go," declares Alex. "Thanks a lot and make sure to bring me my robot, ok?"

I hang up, laughing.

After concluding the call, they both come running into my office, slightly out of breath.

"Daddy, we spoke to Santa! We spoke to Santa!" They are grinning from ear to ear.

Even in Thailand, Santa is spreading Christmas cheer to kids. Not a bad gig really.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from The Sweet Science in Thailand!

News and Notes

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Rom Klao, Minburi, Thailand, Dec. 19: Once again proving his punch is to be feared, Poonsawat Kratingdaeng (26-1, 17 KOs) did exactly what was expected of him as he destroyed Filipino fighter Pederito Laurente (17-11-1, 8 KOs), knocking him out at 2:34 of round two.

Poonsawat has fought twice since his July defeat at the hands of Vladimir Sidorenko, winning both by second round KO.

Before knocking out Laurente, the Thai confidently stated, "I don't know if I'll go back down to bantamweight or stay at super bantamweight but it doesn't matter who I fight or where. I'll fight anyone, anytime, it doesn't matter who they are."

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Dhurakijpundij University, Nonthaburi, Thailand, Dec. 22: Wandee Singwantha (51-7-1, 11 KOs) obliterated Indonesia's Marti Polli (8-5, 4 KOs) in round three of a scheduled six round contest. Polli was overmatched from the start and it was clear from the outset it was only a matter of time before Polli was stopped.

On the undercard, Sataporn Singwantha (17-3, 10 KOs) rebounded from his fourth round KO loss to Yodsanan Sor Nanthachai when he easily outboxed Darim Nanggala of Indonesia before stopping him in round eight.

Former WBC belt holder Sirimongkol Singwantha, originally scheduled to compete on the show, did not compete. No official explanation was given; there were rumors he had not trained and his current weight was 150 lbs and there were also rumors he was unhappy with the purse offered.

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For the second time in a row, WBC Bantamweight bauble holder Hozumi Hasegawa has won Japan's fighter of the year award. No surprise here. Hasegawa recently decisioned Genaro Garcia, knocking him down two times in the process and knocked out former champion Veeraphol Sahaprom in round nine of their rematch.

Upcoming Bouts in 2007

January 3, 2007 – Ariake Coliseum, Tokyo, Japan
Cristian Mijares vs. Katsushige Kawishima
Edwin Valero vs. Michael Lozada

January 26, 2007 – Samut Sakorn, Thailand
Chonlatarn Piriyaipinyo vs. TBA
Saddam Kietyongyuth vs. TBA
Puangluang Sor Singyu vs. TBA

February 16, 2007 – Klong Prem Prison, Bangkok, Thailand
Siriporn Sor Sirporn vs. Ayaka

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Nongmai Sor Siriporn vs. Rungfah Sithpavan

February 24, 2007 – Tenggaraong City, Borneo, Indonesia

Chris John vs. Jose Rojas

March 17, 2007 – Cebu, Philippines

Z Gorres vs. Fernando Montiel

Gerry Penalosa vs. Jhonny Gonzalez

Rey Bautista vs. Daniel Ponce De Leon