While getting his hands wrapped for his match against James Irvin, Anderson Silva had boxing on his mind.

"Do you think I could beat Roy Jones Jr.?" he asked cutman Jacob "Stitch" Duran.

"I told him he should go for it," said Stitch, passing the wraps between each of Silva's fingers. "In fact, I think Silva has a chance to knock him out."

Stitch is not the only one who likes Silva's chances should such a fight ever come off. Many boxing insiders like his chances should Silva try his hand at the sweet science. "If anyone can do it, it's Silva," says former boxing and kick boxing champion James Warring.

Whether or not the match is made is a different story. Dana White has repeatedly stated that he will not allow the fight to happen. Silva's manager, Ed Soares, has stated that Silva is committed to his UFC contract and will not retire early but some close to the MMA star believe he indeed will retire from MMA and that it will come sooner than expected, that it will happen sometime in 2009, which will free up a still prime Silva for a challenge he has not stopped thinking about---a boxing match against Roy Jones Jr.

While warming up for the Irvin match, his mind drifted again to Roy Jones. "He asked all of us in the room how he should fight him," continued Duran. "He asked Don House, the other UFC cut man, to train him if the fight comes off."

If Silva does retire from MMA, the match will be much easier to make. With Jones having lost the Calzaghe match earlier this month, a Silva bout might be his most lucrative option. Further adding to the intrigue is the fact that some boxing insiders are not ruling out Silva's chances.

He has dominated MMA and has proven himself to be an elite fighter, a once in a lifetime talent. He has had two professional boxing matches and is considered a world class Muay Thai specialist. What he would be attempting is not unprecedented. Several Muay Thai champions have won boxing championships. Saensak Muangsurin did so in 1975 in only his third boxing match. More recently, Veeraphol Sahaprom made the switch over to boxing and became world champ in his fourth bout. Kick boxing champions Troy Dorsey and James Warring also became boxing champions. Many speculate that the timing is right for Silva. Jones is no longer the unbeatable force that he once was. James "Buddy" McGirt has already shown the world how to beat Jones in a boxing match. A former champion himself, McGirt masterminded the right plan when he trained Antonio Tarver, who has twice beaten Jones.

"The key with Jones is you have to be on him," McGirt says. "You have to punch when he punches. Don't let him get off or else you're in trouble." McGirt has never seen Silva fight so he can't comment specifically on his chances, although he doubts that someone with only two fights could win. "I don't think it'll happen. He's only had two fights. I don't think any

commission would allow it. Boxing will be a laughingstock."

But it's happened before. Olympic champion Pete Rademacher challenged Floyd Patterson in 1957 for the heavyweight championship of the world in his pro debut. He came within seconds of scoring an historic upset, dropping the champ in round two before losing in six. In 1975, yet another boxer was allowed to challenge for a world title in his first fight. Rafael Lovera challenged champion Luis Estaba for the junior bantamweight title. While both Rademacher and Lovera lost their fights, Silva has a pair of advantages over Jones that might help him win. He's bigger and younger than Jones, who is near the end of his great career.

Trainer Emanuel Steward admitted knowing very little about Silva but did mention that the way to beat Jones is with counterpunches. With the physical advantages that he holds over Jones, Silva may be well suited to taking a counter puncher's approach. At 6'2, he's four inches taller than Jones and also could benefit from his four inch reach advantage.

Steward's assistant, Joey Gamache volunteered more. "Jones was once a great boxer and puncher but he's a different fighter today. He gets hit more. If he is pushed with a non-stop attack, he can not sustain that pace. Of course, if Jones hits anyone right, he can knock them out but, he can be outhustled." Outworking Jones may be a viable option for Silva, who is in excellent condition. Jones has developed a tendency recently to fight in spurts. If Silva can outwork Jones when Jones is coasting and follow McGirt's advice to punch with him, he could put himself in position to win a decision.

James Warring cautions that throwing punches for 12 rounds is harder than it looks. "But Silva is ahead of his time. He is the best fighter in the world today, period!" In addition to his championships in kick boxing and boxing, Warring also competed in MMA. He was a finalist at the 1995 World Combat Championships-losing to Renzo Gracie. "The only thing that could beat him is himself in MMA. But boxing is different. MMA is easier than boxing because you have more choices. If your strikes aren't working, you can kick. If your kicks aren't working, you can take it to the ground and grapple. But in boxing you only have one weapon. Boxers punch so hard and the punches come so fast that an inexperienced guy won't know what to do." Warring continued. "But Silva is a special fighter. I know he has a Muay Thai and boxing background, but I'm not sure what the quality of opposition he faced was. My money would be on Jones but maybe he can knock out Jones, who knows. But I don't expect Jones to go down from punches as easily as some of his MMA opponents have."

Howard Davis Jr., boxing instructor for American Top Team and former Olympic gold medalist, agrees that Silva will be facing something he has never seen. "First of all, I don't think it'll happen. Remember, Jones was never a huge pay per view draw. The fight they should be talking up is GSP against De La Hoya. I've seen GSP in the ring and he can move better than many boxers." On Silva's chances he says, "I don't think his hand work is good enough even against a faded Jones."

Former boxing champion Wayne McCullough thinks that Silva's hand work would be less effective with boxing gloves. "I think both should wear MMA gloves. Using smaller gloves, I think Silva has a good chance. He has natural talent and with solid boxing training he probably

could do it."

Ideally, Silva should have a series of fights to develop his boxing skills and acquire the necessary seasoning to compete against top tier boxers over the course of a 12 round fight. His lack of experience is a huge disadvantage, although you can argue that Silva is a bigger threat than some of the boxers who challenged Jones for the title were, such as Richard Frazier.

Troy Dorsey, who's won world championships in boxing, kick boxing and karate, says, "Silva is gonna have to put a lot of pressure on him to win. He's going to have to impose his will on him." Dorsey, who's an avid follower of MMA, points out that many good fighters have come up short when venturing into other fighting sports. "Silva is known for his Muay Thai but his jiu-jitsu can beat you too. I don't know how he will do strictly boxing but lately, he's been dropping guys with punches." Could it be that Silva has been quietly developing his boxing skills behind the scenes?

"It's not easy," continued Dorsey. "I was blessed to be able to do it. I don't think it's a smart fight for Silva unless it's for a lot of money. I know his confidence is pushing him but it's a different sport. It takes A LOT of training."

Other fighters have risen to the occasion. Silva is a special fighter and in many ways better than some of the fighters that successfully crossed over to boxing. Silva is not calling out boxing's best either. You could argue that calling out the 2008 version of Jones is like boxer Wladimir Klitschko challenging the present day Ken Shamrock. Nonetheless, it's still a monumental task, but Silva is a special fighter who just may be up to it. Stitch Duran said, "Worst case scenario, he loses by decision. He won't embarrass himself."

A loss won't hurt his reputation. A win will make him an icon perhaps on the same level as Pele. Warring says it's worth the risk if Silva can box. "I hope for him that he does win. I did it and Dorsey did it. It's an amazing feeling."

For now, Silva can only dream about what it feels like.