

Written by Michael Woods
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I noticed Mrs. Van Staden during the second round of her husband Danie's fight against Gabriel "Tito" Bracero, which took place Saturday night at the Aviator complex in Brooklyn.

She stood out because of her intensity, or more specifically, the fear, the worry that registered on her face. Her husband, who she later told me was a standout amateur in South Africa, where the couple met, was getting the worst of it at the hands of Bracero on a "Broadway Boxing" card promoted by Lou Dibella. Chantelle Van Staden's face told the tale of what was going on in the ring, as Bracero, who entered the ring with just two KOs in sixteen wins, against no losses, was landing clean shots on her guy.

A clash of heads opened up a vertical cut on Van in the first, but the bleeding was controlled in his corner. Bracero, though, was not to be managed; in round two, Van was in deep water, already, and he was sent to the mat from a right hand, after being buzzed by a left hook. A right cross in the second gave the 30-year-old Bracero, fighting out of Sunset Park, Brooklyn, another knockdown, and by now Chantelle looked alarmed. When Bracero landed a sure, clean, straight right which sent the 34-year-old Van to the floor out cold, Chantelle was panicked.

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I reached out to her after we all breathed a sigh of relief, when Van got his senses back, and was able to sit up. Bracero (17-0 with 3 KOs) bathed in the afterglow of the win, which came at 1:08 of the third, as I gently interviewed Chantelle.

I had nudged the fella sitting next to me, USA Today/Boxing Scene's Mike Coppinger, and told him that if I had to bet, I'd say that this was Danie's last bout as a pro, if his missus had anything to say about it. So, I put the question to her: will you beg, plead and if necessary issue an ultimatum to your husband, to get him to hang up the gloves?

"No," she said, with no hesitation. "It's his right. I might not like it, but it's his love. I'm his love, too, but I've made that decision when I met him."

The pair met 13 years ago, and have been married for six years.

"It comes with the territory," she explained. It does, as this is the fifth time her husband has been stopped as a pro. His record drops to 8-7.

I gently probed further, asking Chantelle what she was thinking when she saw her guy go down in a heap. "I thought my heart was going to stop," she admitted.

This column goes out to the ladies, to the wives, to the moms, the daughters who bleed a little bit inside when their husband, son or father gets the worst of it in the ring.

SPEEDBAG Lou Dibella was kind enough to let me film a video homage to the Sweet Science's George Kimball, the liberal, literary lion of the fightwrite community, who died from cancer on July 6, six years after being given six months or so to live. I considered an act of defiance in honor of George, who was a staunch anti-war protestor during the Vietnam era, considered lighting up an unfiltered Lucky Strike, his go-to smoke. But I wussed out, and instead just articulated how much the fight game will miss his wordsmithery. Sorry George; I can only apologize and promise I will continue to afflict the comfortable, rip a deserved wretch a new one when deserved, in your vein, when warranted. You'll be able to see the homage, and Bracero's hellacious KO in the NY area on August 14.

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