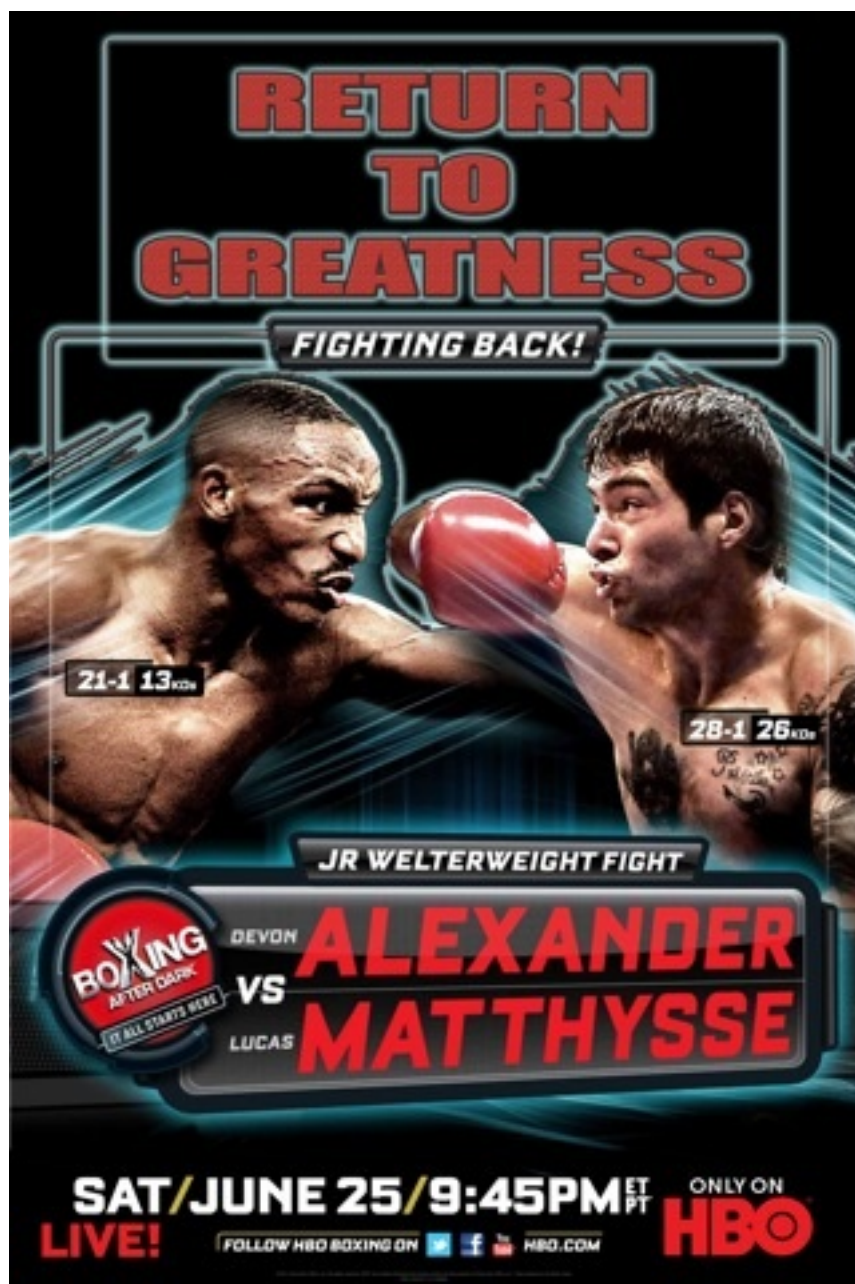


DEVON ALEXANDER: "Now I'm Ready To Rock 'n Roll"

Written by Rick Folstad

Wednesday, 15 June 2011 14:18



You get the feeling this fight isn't all about title belts.

It isn't about paydays, hometown heroes, bragging rights or pound-for-pound lists. To Devon Alexander, this fight is about proving something to himself. And maybe proving it to anyone else who doesn't believe in him.

Since that nightmare loss back in January against Timothy Bradley, it seems like Alexander has been banished from the lofty list of top junior-welterweights in the world. You start talking about the best fighters in the division and Devon's name doesn't pop up quite as soon as he'd like it to. It's not lonely at the top. It's lonely when you're not there anymore.

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"Nobody likes to lose," Alexander (21-1, 13 KOs) said on a conference call promoting his "comeback" fight with Argentina's Lucas Matthyse (28-1, 26 KOs) on June 25 at the Family Arena in St. Charles Missouri (HBO). "I was upset for a couple weeks, but it's not like it was the end of the world. It's not like Bradley dominated the fight. It was something I didn't do. Bradley didn't do anything we didn't expect him to do. It was all me."

Well, it was a little bit of Bradley. He won on a technical decision in the tenth after another accidental clash of heads.

Expectations were sky high for the fight, but it never lived up to its top billing. It was more of a snoozer than an eye-opener, and it left Alexander standing out in the cold looking in, knowing he belonged inside.

And that's what this fight with Matthyse is really about. It's a chance for Alexander to show that the fiasco in January was just a fluke, an anomaly, a lousy day at work.

We all have them.

"It was just one of those nights where you go in there and do what you want to do as opposed to what your (game) plan was," Alexander said. "You listen to the crowd and start doing what the crowd wants you to do. That's not how you do it. You've been following a game plan all through training camp and you had a perfect game plan and you throw it away in one night. I know I'm way better than Bradley. But I let it slip out of my hands."

So Alexander is looking for a little redemption, a second chance, an opportunity to prove he's among the top junior-welterweights in the world.

But the thing about redemption is that it requires a letdown, a mistake, something bad happening. You can't have redemption without first having disappointment.

After his loss to Bradley, Alexander said he was reminded that Sugar Ray Leonard lost his first fight with Roberto Duran, but later came back and knocked him out in a rematch.

"There's motivation," he said.

But there were still hard questions about his poor performance.

"When you don't go out and do what you're capable of doing, and you come up short, you're going to get criticized," said Alexander's trainer, Kevin Cunningham. "I accept the criticism and he accepts the criticism. We accept full responsibility for coming up short in a great opportunity that was before us. But I'm telling you, we won't come up short on June 25 and I believe this fight is going to be a lot tougher fight than the Bradley fight."

They didn't exactly pick a tomato can for Alexander's planned trip back to top contention. Matthyse has 26 knockouts in his 28 wins, his only set back coming last November when he lost a close, split decision to Zab Judah, who was knocked down by Matthyse in the later

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rounds.

"If I didn't think Devon was the real deal - wasn't exactly who we say he is - I would have taken steps to go find him a soft touch and start all over again," Cunningham said. "But Devon is clearly one of the best fighters in the 140-pound division, so there is no need to find him a soft opponent."

They didn't.

"As far as the Bradley fight goes, yeah, Devon didn't perform up to his capabilities and Bradley got the win, which he deserved," Cunningham said. "But if you look at the fight, it's nip-and-tuck and my guy is doing nothing that he's capable of doing, but it's still a close fight with the No. 1 guy in the division. So there is no reason to step back. That's why we're taking on one of the strongest guys in the division."

Alexander claims he's put the loss to Bradley behind him.

"I use it as a learning lesson," he said. "And now I'm ready to rock and roll."