

Be Ready For A Long Night, Lucian Bute...FOLSTAD

Written by Rick Folstad

Wednesday, 26 October 2011 14:54



Be ready for a long night, Lucian Bute. Eat healthy, stay in shape and get lots of rest the day of the fight. Don't party, don't stay up too late, don't skip your roadwork and don't look past this guy. You give him an opening, he'll stomp on you. He isn't just some over-the-hill tomato can looking for another big paycheck before he hangs up his gloves. He's a former world champ. He expects to win this fight just like he expects to win all his fights. And he's got enough ring savvy and fire still left inside him to do it if you're not ready.

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But you knew that, didn't you Lucian. You spent more than a few hours sparring with Glen "The Road Warrior" Johnson back in the fall of 2009 when you were getting ready to fight Librado Andrade and Johnson was getting ready to fight "Bad" Chad Dawson. Almost 100 rounds of swapping punches between you two guys and you got to be friends. And you still are, though that friendship has been put on the shelf until your fight is over.

And what did you two learn from sparring with each other? Aside from gaining some mutual respect, no one is letting out any secrets.

Bute (29-0, 24 KOs) is the IBF super-middleweight champion and he's scheduled to fight Johnson (51-15-2, 35 KOs) on Nov. 5 at the Pepsi Coliseum in Quebec City on SHOWTIME. And Bute knows a win over Johnson, a former light-heavyweight champion, would add a big name to his resume.

"We know that sparring is always different from a real fight," Bute said on a recent conference call. "I think the one that gained the most between the two of us in that sparring was me. I came there and it built up my confidence. It was hard sparring and we wanted to win every day. It was competitive, it was great and I think I improved and gained my confidence sparring with Glen Johnson."

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Glen Johnson got something back, too.

“It was great work,” Johnson said. “Both of us accomplished our goal. We were doing hard work and I believe we both got better. Obviously, I was fighting a better guy (Dawson) than Lucian was fighting. I came out on the losing side and he came out on the winning side.”

Friends or not, Bute says Johnson, 42, has seen and done almost everything in boxing, so there is not a lot they can do to catch him by surprise.

“He’s always there and he’s always in great condition,” Bute said. “He’s faced all the greatest fighters. (Roy) Jones, (Antonio) Tarver, Dawson twice, (Bernard) Hopkins in the beginning. I watched them all and I can say by far, he is my best opponent with the best credibility and the best resume. For me, it’s a major step up.”

“I have a lot of respect for Lucian,” Johnson said. “But you’re fighting for your career, you’re fighting for everything, so you’ve got to go out there and give it your all. You can resume your friendship later.”

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“We have mutual respect, but our careers are on the line here,” Bute said. “The night of the fight, I’m going to give it my all. There are no friends in the ring. We’re going to be friends after the (fight). But I’m going to have my survival instincts on the night of the fight.”

For Johnson, this is just another long plane ride to another strange city for another tough fight. He’s called the “Road Warrior” for a reason. He carries his passport in his gym bag, has an extra set of clean clothes hanging in his locker, and he’s got enough frequent flier miles for a free trip around the world. But he’s already been there.

As for fighting in front of hostile crowds, Johnson, who lives in Miami and was born in Jamaica, has a knack of winning them over. The crowd usually starts out booing him but after a few rounds, they see the kind of fighter he is and they can’t help but start clapping for the old guy.

Bute, meanwhile, is the hometown favorite in this fight. Though born in Romania, he lives in Montreal, which means the undefeated champ doesn’t need an airline ticket to get to the Coliseum, just cab fare. This will be his ninth title defense. He’s scored seven knockouts in his previous eight defenses.

The winner of the fight will probably get a shot at the winner of the Super Six World Boxing Classic Final scheduled for Dec. 17 between world champions Andre Ward and Carl Froch.

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In his last fight, Johnson lost a majority decision to Froch and said he's pulling for Froch to beat Ward so he gets another shot at him.

"I'd like a chance to avenge my loss," he said.

Even if it's on the road.

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