

## Sulaiman Psyched For Vitali-Charr

Written by Jose Sulaiman

Tuesday, 04 September 2012 19:21

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I boarded my flight from London to Moscow, bound for the great fight between heavyweight champion **Vitali Klitschko** and **Manuel Charr**, who was born in Lebanon - the first "countryman" of my dad to fight for a world title. This, I'm convinced, will thrill all Lebanese people within the great nation of Lebanon itself - described as the land of paradise in the Bible, as well as those whose destinies are spread far and wide, covering the four corners of the Earth. The fight will be the second WBC world championship in Russia. Champion Vitali Klitschko is already close to retirement, aged forty, but still incredibly strong and skillful.

I wish to be beside him in his last fights because of the great admiration, respect, and fond friendship I have for him. But I also want to be there to see Charr fighting and when this happens, I will turn my eyes to the sky thinking of my dad, who will be watching his countryman fighting with all his heart and all his might. My old man was a boxing fan! As a kid, and when he knew I had fought with other kids, he punished me by hitting me with his belt and then ... he asked me who had won - me or the other kids!? That's how I was educated. I really thank my greatest idol: my Father.

It is always good to take a long flight. You're alone with your thoughts and close to the huge blue sky. This solitude sometimes helps you, as it offers the opportunity to reflect. And when you're so thinking, memories then flood back, blended with nostalgia of unique moments that can never return. But also simultaneously, the joy of have lived amazing times, and also the privilege of witnessing great battles, achieved by the magnificent boxers I've met, and then the post-fight parties I've attended.

Once, at one of **Oscar Bonavena's** fights, a young lady entered the ring wearing a mink coat which she then removed ... revealing she was naked. She went to jail, although she was at the subsequent party perfectly and stylishly attired!

**Carlos Monzon**, when he fought **Jose "Mantequilla" Napoles**, left his urine sample for antidoping tests and it turned out to be pure champagne! While

**Richard Steele**

, who was always side by side with me, was the first black referee to work a fight in Berlin.

On my first visit to Moscow I harboured some apprehension, but the residents turned out to be among the most marvellous boxing people in the world, celebrating at any occasion to honor all

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the members of their families.

In Casablanca, Morocco, they placed a tablecloth for each and every dish. I didn't count, but I recall there must have been around nine!

In London, champion **Gerald McClellan** suffered a knockout against **Nigel Benn** which destroyed his health. The WBC continues to help and support Gerald.

This last memory is a sad moment of many that I can't forget. It urged us to look for ways and means in which to help boxers who in past eras were disgracefully treated as merchandise. This is a major issue which confronts us and against which we battle every day - and will fight for ever and ever. Money comes and money goes. Only at the end does the boxer realize the lights have all been turned off. Then they're left with nothing, no friends, and they're abused by unscrupulous people around them. They've reached old age without bread to eat. The only sustenance that sustains their souls involves dreaming back to the glory years when they were shining stars.

That's life in boxing. When I used to talk with my dear friend Napoles, we broached his expenses and money abuse, and then he explained: "When I was a kid I was a bootblack. Now I'm king and I will live as one ... even though I have to live once again as bootblack in the future. That's why I admire and respect DON - with capital letters - **Carlos Slim**. He has provided pensions for 27 great former champions and also taken care of their medical expenses. For our part, the WBC is planning to start the first Boxing World Cup, in which money will be specifically set aside for a pension fund to help those former boxers who have fallen on hard times.