

Baha Signs With Don King

Written by The Sweet Science
Thursday, 09 May 2013 10:42

DEERFIELD BEACH, Fla.—Emerging lightweight boxer Bahodir “Baha” Mamadjonov traveled to Don King’s office in South Florida today to sign a long-term promotional agreement with the legendary promoter.

A heralded amateur with over 200 fights, Mamadjonov won several championships fighting out of his native Uzbekistan before moving to Houston two years ago to turn professional under the guidance of trainer Ken Richardson. He has fought often and risen rapidly as evidenced by his record: 13-1 with nine knockouts.

“Signing with Don King brings me closer to my goal of winning a world championship,” Mamadjonov said. “That is what drives me every day. I want to win a world title for my family and the people of Uzbekistan who always believed in me.”

Key to Mamadjonov’s success has been a fearlessness and work ethic that has allowed the 25-year-old to take fights on short notice that less industrious fighters would have missed. His trainer said some have gone as far as criticizing him for moving his fighter along too fast.

“My belief is that if a boxer is prepared and stays in training year-round, he can and should be ready to fight at all times,” Richardson said. “Baha is passionate about the sport and wants to fight as often as he can.”

Mamadjonov’s rapid rise began when his first six fights took place in less than six months. That was in 2011. He fought six more times in 2012.

Richardson further tempted fate by accepting four key fights for Mamadjonov in the last 16 months on notice varying from two weeks down to three days.

Archie Ray Marquez was 12-1 before facing Mamadjonov on Nov. 10, 2011, and Michael Clark was 42-6 going in against the Uzbeki on March 1, 2012. Mamadjonov won both fights by decision, serving notice he would be a force to be reckoned with.

Undefeated Darley Perez was to have met Michael Katsidis last August, but Katsidis pulled out two weeks before the fight with a knee injury. Mamadjonov took the fight and dominated until round five when an accidental clash of heads resulted in blurred vision in his left eye.

After suffering a flash knockdown in round eight, Mamadjonov still almost won the fight, which went to Perez by split decision after 10 rounds.

Another undefeated and touted lightweight, Angelo Santana, lost his opponent on April 12 just one week before the match. Mamadjonov willingly accepted the challenge and made the most of the opportunity.

After suffering a flash knockdown from a Santana jab in round 2, Mamadjonov took control of the fight. After six rounds, the three judges had the fight scored even at 66 apiece.

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In a pivotal round eight, Mamadjonov battered Santana unmercifully along the ropes before he crumbled to the mat. The Cuban made it to round nine, but Mamadjonov floored him twice more before the referee halted the contest.

“I hit Santana with a body shot in the seventh round and I heard him groan so I tried to stop him,” Mamadjonov said. “In the eighth round, I said to myself, ‘Baha, you must stop him now.’ “Don’t forget, I took the fight on short notice and had to lose a lot of weight quickly. There was no time for me to waste.”

Promoter Don King loves what he has seen from his newest fighter.

“I am extremely pleased and proud to have Baha with me,” King said. “I expect great things from this young man because he’s dedicated and committed to becoming a world champion. He took the fight with Santana on almost no notice and stopped a great lightweight.

“Baha reveres industrialist Alisher Usmanov from his native Uzbekistan and he wants to bring a world title back home for him and the people of Uzbekistan.”

Mamadjonov risked everything to come to the United States to pursue his dream of winning a world title.

“When you see me fight ferociously it’s because I want to achieve great things,” Mamadjonov said. “I want a world title more than anything I have ever dreamed of in my life.”

Mamadjonov is proud to be represented by King.

“Don King is a superstar in my country,” Mamadjonov said. “Just the fact I was meeting with him in his office today was news in Uzbekistan. I can’t wait to tell everyone back home he is now my promoter.

Trainer-manager Richardson echoed the feelings of his fighter.

“Don always took my calls when I was looking for a promoter,” Richardson said, “and I never forget that. When fate brought us together for the Santana fight, I was reminded that Don is a world promoter. I’ve always said that if you are or want to be a world champion boxer, Don King is the guy you want to be with.”