

Makabu and Joyi Count Down To Monaco Scraps

Written by The Sweet Science
Tuesday, 21 January 2014 08:51

MONTE-CARLO **BOXING BONANZA**

The two African boxers featuring on the Monte Carlo Boxing Bonanza bill next weekend are both in the shape of their lives, according to their trainers.

Ilunga “Junior” Makabu (15-1, 14 KOs), who hails from the Democratic Republic of Congo and is based in South Africa, fights unbeaten **Ruben Angel Mino** (20-0, 20 KOs) of Argentina.

Nkosinathi Joyi (24-2, 17 KOs), from the boxing heartland of South Africa’s Eastern Cape province, challenges for the vacant IBO light-flyweight title against **Rey Loreto** (17-13, 9 KOs) of the Philippines.

The fights are on the undercard of WBA and IBO middleweight champion **Gennady Golovkin’s** (28-0, 25 KOs) title defence against **Osumanu Adama** (22-3, 16 KOs) of Ghana.

According to Harold Volbrecht, Makabu’s trainer and a former two-time world title challenger, his protégé is comfortably three kilograms under the limit and ought to be perfect for next week’s weigh-in.

“We’ve had good camps before, but we’ve taken it to a new level for this show,” said Volbrecht. “Junior’s brother is a heavyweight and he has given us tremendous sparring. We’ve also done many rounds with [SA light-heavyweight] champion Johnny Muller. Junior is sharper than ever.”

Notwithstanding a succession of changes to opponents – Pawel Kolodziej and Nathan Cleverly

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both withdrew – Volbrecht has no issues with Makabu fighting Mino.

“That’s just boxing. I don’t agree with fighters who make a big deal of such developments. You’re supposed to be professional. It’s like a doctor arriving for surgery and having to work on a gall bladder rather than an appendix. You roll up your sleeves and get on with it if you’re a pro. You must be prepared, no excuses.”

With Makabu on the brink of being installed as the number one contender in the WBA following current number one Kolodziej signing to challenge for the IBF belt, every fight is now tremendously important for the transplanted African.

“[Promoter] Rodney Berman is guiding him smartly. But it’s getting harder,” says Volbrecht. “This guy is just 26 but already has a fearsome reputation. Guys who get the call to fight aren’t ready, they’re not on the weight or whatever, but mostly they want nothing to do with him.

“The guy we’re fighting is an unbeaten puncher. On paper he looks good, but what matters is what he does in the ring. I expect Makabu to come hard.”

Joyi, one of the finest fighters to have emerged from South Africa in the past decade, recently switched trainers, joining Gert Strydom in Johannesburg. His Mdantsane home is 1000km (620 miles) away.

“He struggled the first week or so with the altitude, but he’s bang on the weight and looking excellent. We’re using top prospect Khanyiso Mbetye for sparring. He fights orthodox or southpaw and on the front or back foot. He gave Joyi a hard time initially, but Joyi now bosses him.”

Having studied footage of Loreto, Strydom says he sees an aggressive, come-forward fighter ideally suited to the former IBF champion’s style.

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“He’ll be in Nkosinathi’s face and that’s what we want. Once he feels the power, I expect he’ll run before Nkosinathi catches him in about round seven or eight. This kid is one of the hardest hitters around. It’s phenomenal how he generates such power for such a small man.”

Joyi has even taken to sleeping in the gym, ensuring he has no distractions ahead of his title bout.

Both camps leave for Monte Carlo on Sunday.

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