SA BOXING EXTREME

ISSUE 04 | APRIL 2020

South Africas No.1 Boxing Magazine

9775643788007

RSA R 25.00 INCL.VAT
OTHER COUNTRIES R26.00 EXCL.VAT



KEVIN LERENA

A record of sixth title defence

AZINGA "GOLDEN BOY" FUZILE

TEAM FUZILE PLANS TO BE BACK IN THE RING IN APRIL

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SA BOXING EXTREME

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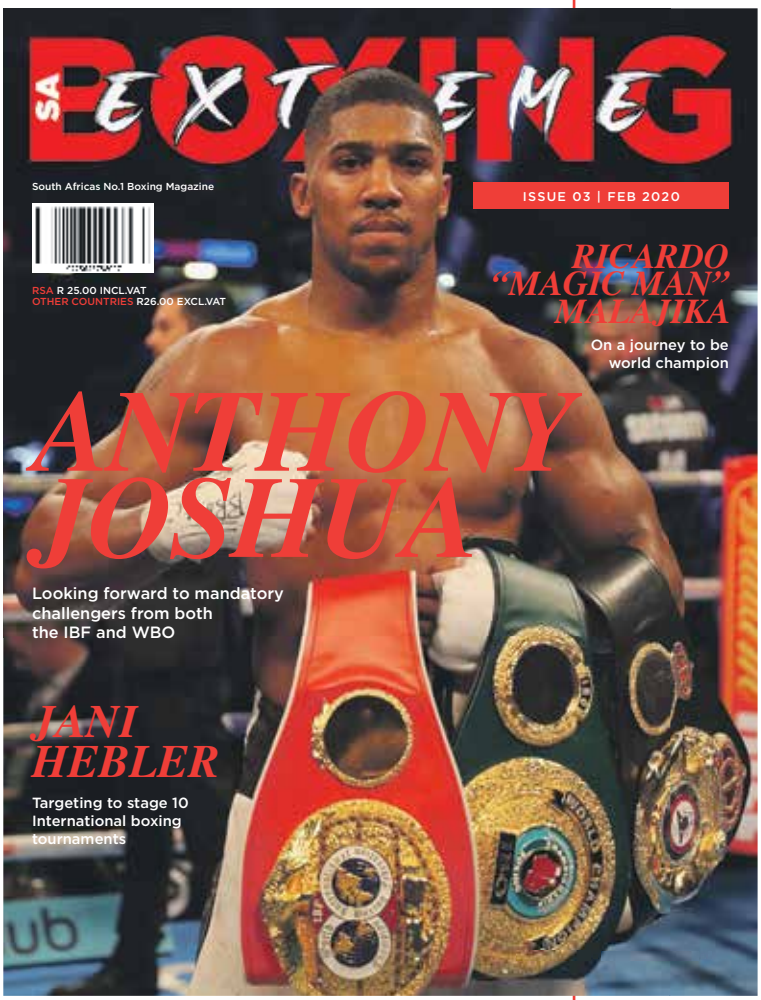
DISTRIBUTION
Media Distribution Africa
8th floor
Metal Box Building
25 Owl Street
Milpark
Tel: 011 250 7401

VENDOR
Allied Publishing (PTY) Ltd

PUBLISHERS
KNOCKOUT Media Pty Ltd
25 Owl Street
Milpark
Tel: 011 250 7300

EDITORIAL NOTE

Magazine available online and digitally



You can now access your favourite magazine , SA Boxing Extreme, online and digitally with selected articles. You will have all access and it is easy to subscribe to the magazine.

We continue to improve both it's digital footprint and the printed magazine found in all retail outlets

Boxing and EFC are in full swing, so expect more coverage at all the events.

Featured on the cover of this edition is the beloved Azinga "Golden Boy" Fuzile. During his interview, he said he believed that GOD had not denied him the opportunity to win the title , but had simply delayed it.

Fuzile is on the comeback and gunning WBA , WBC and IBO titles that may be on the taking. He is one of the talented boxers in the country.

We continue to Focus on the development of boxing and the difficulties faced by amateur boxing in the township and rural areas. Female boxing has not been left behind and with more vacant titles, hope to see more action.

BSA CEO, Tsholofelo Lejake has commented that the Boxing Convention to deal with all boxing matters will take place in May or June.

South Africa boxers did not take part at the African Continental Olympic Tokyo 2020. This denied the opportunity for boxers to showcase their talent at world stage.

SASCOC suggested sending a team of boxers to Olympic Qualifying in Paris. France in May.

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WABA MERGES BOXING WITH OTHER SPORTS



In a bid to beef up its share in the emerging market, WABA is setting up WABA MMA kickboxing and WABA Muay Thai to complement its effort in the boxing industry.

WABA Chief Officer Irene Joseph says the organisation is planning several workshops and seminars to train ring officials and give them a comprehensive understanding of the sport of boxing. The training will take place in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and South America respectively.

The training will involve boxing, Mauythai, MMA and Kickboxing ring officials.

"These are the greatest sports in the world and the seminars will give officials a chance to share knowledge of them," says Joseph.

WABA has appointed members of its Championship Committee, including Steve Kalakoda, Commissioner for the Southern African Region, Sterling McPherson, Commissioner for the USA and Samphop Singhasiri, Commissioner for Indochina.

Joseph says WABA has merged with Universal Boxing Alliance(UBA) for the development of boxing. "We'll have unified titles where champions of the two respective bodies will clash out for titles," she explains.

These titles are WABA Supreme Southern Africa, WABA Supreme East Africa, WABA Supreme All Africa, WABA Anglophone West Africa, WABA North Africa, WABA Zone2region, WABA Supreme Central Africa, Francophone West Africa, All Africa Female, World Female, Intercontinental Female and International Female.





SIPHO NDONGENI: SA'S TOP BOXING JUDGE

Sipho Ndongeni, South Africa's renowned boxing referee and judge, will be one of the officials at the World Africa Boxing Association (WABA) and World Boxing Federation (WBF) tournaments, which will be held to celebrate Freedom Day in Zimbabwe. Ndongeni will be the judge for the main bout. The tournament will be the first one for WABA in the southern region involving top Zimbabwean and Namibian boxers.

He says that being a middleman in such tournaments isn't an individual achievement, but represents the objectives of boxing in South Africa. "The southern region has talent in boxing and such a tournament will play a major role in developing the sport," he explains.

Ndongeni started boxing at the age of 10, aiming to become a world champion. His knowledge of the sport eventually drew the attention of Mickey Klass, who recruited him as a professional referee and judge. He was registered as a boxing official in 2012 and joined the African Boxing Union (ABU) and the WBF.

"I regarded people like Dionne Duarte as role models and wanted to follow their footsteps. When I joined the ABU and WBF, I realised I was on the right track," he says.

Ndongeni was nominated for the most Promising Ring Official of the Year in 2017. His first overseas duty was the WBF fight between Donald Brown and Ilia Beruashvili in Germany. Ndongeni was the only judge from South Africa.

"My other highlights were the WBF fight between Ayanda Mthembu and Maisha Samson from Tanzania in KwaZulu-Natal, where I was the third man in the ring, and the SA featherweight elimination fight between Abdulaziz Kunert and Mfusi Maxhayi from East London it was a cracker," he says.

Ndongeni says officials face many challenges in the ring, especially the awareness that the boxers' lives depend on their observations and decisions. "Some boxers throw punches while their opponent's down in a kneeling position and you're left with no choice but to disqualify the offender. Not all boxers realise that you can kneel down and take eight counts if you're caught and wait until you've fully recovered, or that letting the referee count you out is better than taking too much punishment, because tomorrow is another day."

Ndongeni's ambition is to become recognised as one of the best South African boxing officials. "You don't have to be brilliant at the work, but you do need to be trustworthy and reliable," he says.

He believes that the development of the sport in the country will require the appropriate equipment and resources. "The fact that we still have boxing clubs which use classrooms as gyms shows that we're still struggling."

He also maintains that boxing teaches valuable lessons to youngsters in terms of determination, self-control and commitment. "Boxing as a disciplined sport can play a big role in our communities," he says.

UNDERSTANDING THE 10-POINT SCORING SYSTEM



Part of mastering a new sport is understanding its rule set. Boxing involves many subtle rules involving both overall technique and strategy. Not every boxing match ends in a spectacular knockout. Many times, match outcomes are left in the hands of the judges.

In a professional boxing match, there are three judges seated ringside who are tasked with determining the winner of each round, who is awarded 10 points, while the kisser receives nine.

A one-point advantage is awarded to a boxer who scores a knockdown, while one point is deducted from his opponent. If one boxer is totally dominant throughout a single round, judges may award that boxer an extra point. In instances where a round is too close to call, judges have the option of declaring the round a 10-10 tie.

If the referee deems it necessary, he or she can deduct a point or two from a boxer for an intentional foul, provided this is done after at least one warning has been issued to the offender.

AGGRESSION vs EFFECTIVE AGGRESSION

Effective aggression is built on a solid game plan and technical skills.

Offensive boxers who know how to cut off the ring and trap their opponent against the ropes or in the corner are usually given merit for their techniques.

Judges are always looking for boxers who know how to approach their offence effectively , overcoming any adjustment the defence throws at them.

RING GENERALSHIP

Ring generalship is the art of using footwork to make full use of the entire ring area. This includes knowing how to cut off the ring to trap the opponent against the ropes or in a corner, as well as knowing how to get out of these positions in defensive situations.

A boxer with great ring generalship and effective aggression is usually the winner of a given round.

HARD and CLEAN PUNCHING

Boxing presents multiple scoring zones, particularly to the head and body. In boxing, heavy emphasis is placed on hard and clean punching.

Boxers who are able to consistently land clean and heavy, damaging blows emerge as clear-cut winners of a given round.

DEFENCE and STRATEGY

A boxer who exhibits a sound game plan in any given round is also given merit, with strategy playing a huge role in how that round is decided. Although judges often prefer scoring for offensive strategy, defence should never be overlooked.

WHO WINS THE FIGHT?

At the end of every bout, the scores are tallied. Whoever ends up with the most points after the match claims victory.

If two of three judges agree on the winner, the result is called a split decision.

If two judges scored a draw, with only one judge picking a winner, the match ends in a majority draw.

If the two judges identify the same winner, with one scoring a draw, it is called a majority decision

If both boxers tally the same number of points, the match ends in an official DRAW.

If all three judges agree on the winner, the match is a unanimous decision.

SA TOP BOXERS WHO PRIDE THE NATION



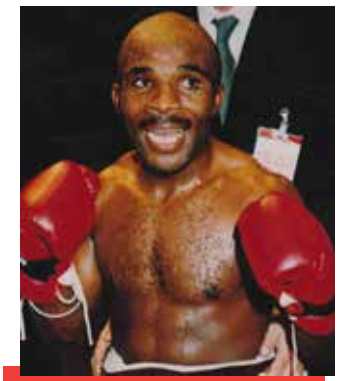
DINGAAN THOBELA

Dingaan "The Rose of Soweto" Thobela established himself as a gifted boxer and favourite of South Africans. A former WBO and WBA Lightweight champion, he's faced the likes of Tony Lopez, Orzubek Nazarov and Karl Taylor.



SILENCE MABUZA

Silence Mabuza, a two-time holder of the International Boxing Organisation (IBO) bantamweight division, turned professional in 1999. His debut was a fight under trainer Elias Tshabalala against Masingita Hlungwane, whom he demolished with a second-round knockout. Mabuza lost the IBF bantamweight title eliminator against Colombian Yonnhy Perez. He started the Mabuza Boxing Academy in Tsakane, Springs.



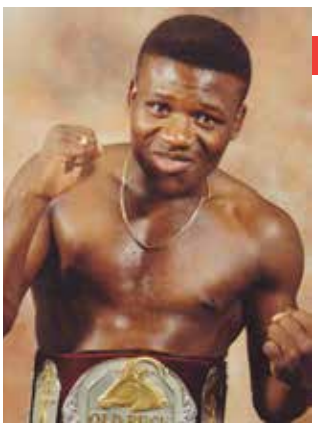
Jacob "Baby Jake" Matlala

Watched by former President Nelson Mandela and American actor Will Smith, Jacob "Baby Jake" Matlala brought the curtain down on his 22-year professional boxing career with a seventh-round stoppage win over Juan Herrera to retain his WBU Junior Flyweight title. He also collected three other titles (WBO Flyweight, WBO Junior Flyweight and IBA Junior Flyweight), becoming the only South African boxer to win four world titles. Matlala had 68 fights with 53 wins and 26 wins by knockouts.

Brain Mitchell

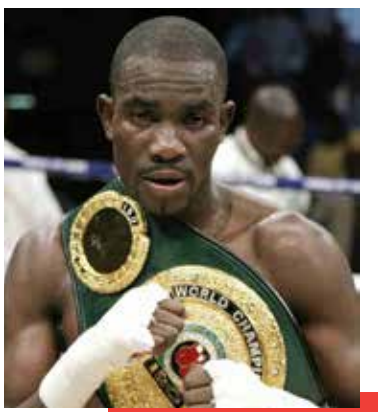
Brian Mitchell is one of the all-time best boxers the country has seen. He is a former IBF Super Featherweight champion, a WBA Super Featherweight champion and South Africa's Super Featherweight champion. Mitchell had 49 title fights, with 45 wins and 21 wins by knockouts. As a trainer, he guided Harry Simon and Cassius Baloyi. Mitchell was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2009.





Vuyani Bhungu

Vuyani "The Beast" Bungu held the IBF Junior Featherweight and IBO Featherweight titles. He defended his IBF title 13 times before finally losing it to Naseem Hamed for the World Boxing Organisation and Lineal Featherweight title. During his career, Bungu won 39 fights, 18 of them by knockouts.



Cassius Baloyi

Born in Malamulele, Limpopo Province, Cassius "The Hitman" Baloyi notched up a total of 46 fights, with 37 wins (19 of them by knockout). A former IBF champion, Baloyi was the only boxer in the country to win an unprecedented six world titles in a professional career spanning 18 years. He hung up his gloves after a fight against Malcolm Klassen in 2012. He has since opened a gym in Sandton, Johannesburg.



Phillip Ndou

Phillip "Time Bomb" Ndou was the only South African boxer to fight Floyd Mayweather, becoming the 13th victim in the latter's run of 47 unbeaten records. Ndou is the former South Africa and WBA Continental Featherweight champion, as well as the WBC International and WBU Junior Lightweight title-holder. He was known for his devastating punching power, having won his first 31 fights. Ndou retired after a fight against Isaac Hlatshwayo.

ILUNGA MAKABU OUTFIGHTS MICHAL CIESLAK TO WIN WORLD TITLE IN KINSHASA HOMECOMING



By Droeks Malan

World championship boxing returned to the Democratic Republic of Congo when local hero, Ilunga "Junior" Makabu, took on unbeaten Polish contender, Michal Cieslak, in Kinshasa with the vacant WBC World Cruiserweight title on the line.

Kinshasa is, of course, the capital (of then Zaire) made famous by Muhammad Ali and George Foreman for their legendary "Rumble in the Jungle" square-off back in 1974, when Ali defied the odds to regain his heavyweight title (the country was then known as Zaire).

It's well-nigh impossible to top the iconic status of Ali-Foreman, but Makabu and Cieslak produced a compelling world-class contest that had the fans on their feet.

Makabu, who's based in South Africa and trained by Damien Durandt, has fought at the top level of the sport for a long time. Going into the bout, he'd won seven straight fights, all but one of them by knockout, since his defeat to Tony Bellew in his first crack at the title back in 2016, when he put Bellew on the floor in the first round, only to get stopped himself in the third one. In 2019 he beat both Dmitry Kudryashov and Aleksei Papin in their native Russia.

He stopped Kudryashov in five rounds in an absolute firefight and prevailed by majority decision over the hitherto undefeated Papin, hurting the



Russian several times and sending him to the floor in the last round of another war.

In a battle of southpaws, Cieslak started well. His side-to-side movement gave Makabu some trouble and he managed to find a home for his right hook to the head and body. The busier fighter, he was boxing well on his toes in the fourth round when Makabu, spurred on by chants of "Bomaye! Bomaye!" ("Kill him! Kill him!") from the crowd, started pressing harder. He suddenly turned Cieslak sideways with a left to the body and quickly followed that up with two of his trademark looping lefts, which deposited the Pole on his back. Cieslak got up on wobbly legs and Makabu poured it on, but somehow failed to find the shot to put Cieslak away, the bell coming as a welcome relief for the Polish fighter.

Cieslak recovered well in the fifth, finding a home for his straight left through the gloves of Makabu, who kept banging his opponent's midriff whenever he could close the gap. It was during one of those moments that Cieslak, with his back to the ropes, uncorked a left uppercut, followed by a looping left to the top of Makabu's head. The combination had the local man stumbling backwards, touching the canvas with his glove, with referee Michael Griffin correctly scoring a knockdown to even the tally at one apiece.

Cieslak continued to box in cruise control in the sixth, but started looking decidedly uncomfortable when Makabu did manage to drive him to the ropes and unload. Makabu stunned Cieslak with a right hook-straight left combo in the seventh and drove him back to the ropes with a double jab, pouring on the pressure towards the end of the round. From then on, the momentum started shifting towards Makabu, who was clearly the harder puncher. Cieslak kept fighting back to keep himself in the fight, but had the look of someone running on fumes.

Makabu simply kept coming, walking through whatever Cieslak threw while smashing in straight lefts and banging the body. A big right uppercut followed by a left hand in the 11th had the crowd excited, but Cieslak hung in to hear the final bell.

Makabu prevailed by unanimous scores of 114-112, 116-111 and 115-111 to become only the second world boxing champion from the DRC, after former WBA Middleweight champion Sumbu Kalambay, who was born in that country, but based in Italy. Makabu improves his record to 27-2 with 24 knockouts, while Cieslak drops to 19-1 with 13 stoppages.

It was also a special moment for his trainer, Damien Durandt, who now has his first world champion, following in the footsteps of his father, the late Nick Durandt, South Africa's most prolific trainer of world champions. "It's very special. I feel as if I've completed my dad's work. He always believed Junior had the potential to be a world champion," said Durandt

Makabu, who often takes one to land one with his hard-punching, pressure-fighting style, is one of fan-friendliest fighters out there. "He's much loved and very respected in the DRC," remarked Durandt. "I wish South African world champions could get that kind of respect at home."

HISTORIC BOXING FIGHT FOR ZIMBABWE





BY Munyarandzi Madzokere

Zimbabwe is set to host a historic first World Africa Boxing Association (WABA) Supreme World Title fight pitting former three-time world champion Namibian Paulus Ambunda against Zimbabwean Tinashe Mwadziwana at City Sports Centre on Independence Day.

Ambunda and Mwadziwana will have a go at each other for the new WABA World Super Bantamweight title.

The potentially explosive title bout is part of the event dubbed Independence Boxing Bonanza, which has been organised by respected local boxing promoter Clyde Musonda of Deltaforce Boxing, in conjunction with another celebrated manager and promoter, Scott Farrell.

Farrell is the CEO of Global Boxing Stars and has worked with the likes of world champion Manny Pacquiao and current WBO world champion John Riel Casemiro, among many others.

WABA President Onesimo McBride announced the historic bout in a press statement.

"History's in the making as Africa's first world-endorsed body, the World Africa Boxing Association, sanctions its First World Supreme World Title pitting two of Africa's best, Paulus Ambunda versus Tinashe Mwadziwana," McBride said.

"As the Founding President and Chairman of the board of WABA, I'm delighted that Zimbabwe's taking pole position to promote the first WABA Supreme World title. This goes a long way with the country's zeal and vigour in promoting Africa as a continent."

There are seven other interesting match-ups for the 18 April boxing fiesta, with another title fight in which female Zimbabwean boxer Monalisa Sibanda defends her WIBA Continental



Super Lightweight title against Happy Dauda Tanzania.

In non-title fights, Kagiso Bagwasi from Botswana and Zimbabwean Freeman Mabvongwe will trade leather in the welterweight division, while featherweight boxer Simbarashe Hokonya dates Steven Bagwasi, also from Botswana.

It's an all-Zimbabwean affair in the heavyweight category, with Noel Mpofu up against Simon Madanhire, while Revai Madondo takes on Malawian Ndao Chirimba.

Bongani Makorova and Tatenda Biningu (bantamweight), as well as Motswana Kutlwano Ogaketse against Ndodana Ncube (lightweight), complete the bout card. Musonda's excited to have a big boxing event as part of the independence celebrations in Zimbabwe.

"For a long time, the only events that have punctuated our independence celebrations have been soccer matches and music gigs. This time we, as the boxing community, thought we should diversify," he says.

"This inaugural WABA title fight is very important for our boxer because it's an opportunity for him to achieve world champion status. You also have to fight the best to be the best.

"Ambunda's doing it for Africa because the belts he's won in the past don't have much to do with his continent. So both of them stand to benefit by taking part in this first-ever WABA supreme championship."

Farrell's keen to make the Independence Boxing Bonanza a resounding success and is also looking to help Zimbabwe boxing grow.

"When Mr Musonda approached me to assist him putting together a fight card and event in Zimbabwe, I was happy to be involved. I'm going to help him market the show and set a plan to take his promotion to the next level," he says.

OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS

- The Republic of Morocco will host the first WABA National Foundation titles to build up its boxers for the lucrative professional level.
- WABA's Great Lakes Africa mega-boxing tournament is a World Supreme three-fight championship set for 23 April which is expected to be bigger than the "Rumble in the Jungle".
- WABA has approved the vacant Supreme Light Middleweight championship fight between Charles Manyuchi and Muhammad Sebyala in Dubai in April.
- The Philippines has confirmed its "WABA Pinoy Number 01" in May 2020.
- Evans Husavihwevhu is also scheduled to challenge for the WABA Ali Africa lightweight title.

The Lebanese tournament - dubbed the "Rumble in the Desert" - will bring boxers from the USA, Russia, Africa, South America and the Asian Pacific.

BOXERS GUNNING FOR SA HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE





Boxing SA (BSA) will declare the SA Heavyweight title vacant after a ruling by the Court of Arbitration for sports in Switzerland.
Ruann Visser, the SA Heavyweight champion, tested positive for an anabolic steroid after a win against Osborne Machimana in 2018.
Visser's scheduled defence of the title against Tian Flick didn't take place after he fell out of the ropes of the ring before the fight. Machimana has since said that the BSA should give back the belt, while Tian Flick – the No 1 contender – is waiting for either Joshua Pretorius or Luke Sutherland to challenge for the title. Justice Siliga is also a contender for it.





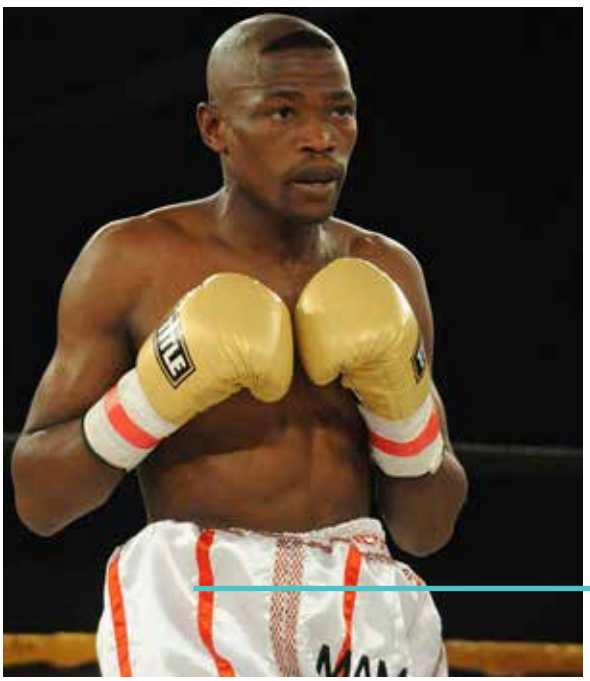
KRIEL FOR IBF TITLE

Dee-Jay Kriel, who won the IBF minimum weight belt when he stopped Carlos Licona and then relinquished the title before defending it, returns to the ring to challenge IBF Light Flyweight champion Felix Alvarado on 25 April. Kriel's only fight after relinquishing the belt was against Jesus Fernando in a first-round stoppage in November last year.



CAMPBELL FIGHT FOR IBO TITLE

Rowan Campbell is to face Evgeny Shvedenko of Russia for the vacant IBO Super Middleweight on 28 March in Karlsruhe, Germany. Shvedenko is the current IBO Intercontinental Super Middleweight and Eurasian Parliament Super Middleweight champion. He has a record of 13-0-6. Campbell remains undefeated in a record of 12 wins with eight KOs. He's won the South African Super Middleweight and IBO All-Africa Super Middleweight titles. In a recent fight, he stopped South Africa's Light Heavyweight champion, Nicholas Radley, in the fourth round of a non-title.



JOYI MAKES FIRST TITLE DEFENCE

Nkosinathi Joyi will make his first title defence of his IBO Minimum Weight title against Ayanda Ndulani on 26 April in East London. In an outstanding performance, Joyi completely outboxed Joey Canoy to win the vacant IBO Minimum Weight belt in a unanimous 12-round point decision.

LERENA SMASHES ARSLAN IN SIX ROUNDS TO RETAIN IBO CRUISERWEIGHT TITLE

South Africa's IBO Cruiserweight champion, Kevin Lerena, journeyed to Goeppingen, Germany, to take on former WBA world champion Firat Arslan.

Arslan's been a player in the Cruiserweight division for a very long time and has taken on a who's-who of the division during his long career. He beat future WBC champion Grigory Drozd back in 2006 and then won the WBA's Interim world title by outpointing Valery Brudov the next year. After that victory, he became the full champion by beating the legendary Virgil Hill. He lost his world title after a single defence, but twice challenged Marco Huck for the WBO world title, first losing an unpopular decision and then getting stopped in the rematch. In his last major fight, he dropped another controversial decision to then IBF and Ring champion Yoan Pablo Hernandez in 2014. The veteran may be 49 years old, but he'd been on an undefeated 14-fight streak since the Hernandez fight.

With both fighting from the southpaw stance, Lerena started the first round by boxing well behind his jab and throwing the occasional left to the body, while Arslan stalked with his gloves held high. From the second, Lerena started turning up the heat and the difference in speed was glaring. Lerena's straight lefts were landing in succession and he had Arslan looking uncomfortable in the third.

Arslan tried his best, bulling his way in and landing two left uppercuts, followed by a right hook in the fourth, which was his best round. However, it made no difference to Lerena, who peppered him with combinations in the fifth and even though Arslan did land some short uppercuts on the inside, the South African was unperturbed, knocking the former



belt-holder back on his heels with a right hook-straight left combo.

The end came at 1:13 of the sixth, when another hard left from Lerena caused Arslan's legs to do a dance. With Arslan backed into a corner, Lerena poured on the combinations. The towel came flying in and the referee called the fight off, giving Lerena the TKO victory. Arslan protested but was taking a lot of punishment at the time of the stoppage.

With that victory, Lerena brings his record to 25-1 with 12 knockouts, while Arslan drops to 47-9-3. Lerena also holds victories over Micki Nielsen, Youri Kalenga and Dmytro Kucher and has now made six defences of his fringe IBO belt. He looks poised for a run at a world title in the major four sanctioning bodies (WBA/WBC/WBO/IBF) in 2020.

If everything goes according to plan, Lerena will next face Ryad Merhy for a secondary WBA title, which will be a solid step in the right direction.

"GOLDEN BOY" AZINGA FUZILE DETERMINED TO SHINE AGAIN

Entering the ring for an IBF world title eliminator at a raucous Orient Theatre in East London in front of his home crowd in September last year, it was clear that junior lightweight contender, Azinga Fuzile, was living up to his nickname of "The Golden Boy". He received a tremendous ovation from the crowd - and why not?

He was 14-0 with eight knockouts and had yet to put a foot wrong in the pro ranks. The former amateur star won the South African featherweight title against the vastly more experienced Macbute Sinyabi in only his fifth outing and recorded wins against the likes of Rofhiwa Maemu and Tshifiwa Munyai before moving up to the junior lightweight division.

He had a breakout 2018, fighting four times, the highlight being a fourth-round TKO victory over former two-time IBF world champion, Malcolm Klassen. He ended that year with a seventh-round stoppage of Ibrahim Mgender to collect the IBF Intercontinental title. He started 2019 by winning a wide points decision over Romulo Koasicha, who had taken pound-for-pound star, Vasyl Lomachenko, 10 rounds in a challenge for the WBO world featherweight title.

However, standing in front of him on that fateful day in the Orient Theatre was fellow unbeaten southpaw, Shavkatdzhon Rakhimov from Russia. Rakhimov, the boogeyman of the division, had cut a swathe of destruction, scoring stoppages of the same Maemu and Klassen, among others. A hard-charging pressure fighter with bricks in his hands, Rakhimov presented the stiffest challenge yet for Fuzile.

What unfolded was a nail-biting nip-and-tuck affair, with hard exchanges, each fighter having his moments, with Fuzile's superior hand speed allowing him to forge ahead on the scorecards, courtesy of eye-catching uppercuts and body punches. Rakhimov was dangerous throughout the fight, but Fuzile looked to be on track.

All of that changed in the fateful eighth round. Rakhimov came on like a Gangbuster and finally caught Fuzile with a massive left, dropping him heavily. He made it to his feet, but Rakhimov's follow-up attack crumpled him face first to the canvas, where he remained.

It was a heartbreaking loss, but then things got even worse. Footage of the fight showed Rakhimov's corner administer illegal smelling salts to their boxer during the break before the eighth. An appeal was lodged and after months of deliberation, the IBF upheld the result, with Rakhimov remaining the mandatory challenger for IBF world champion, Joseph Diaz, but Fuzile retaining a number four ranking in the organisation and receiving another opportunity for an IBF world title eliminator.



According to manager/trainer Colin Nathan, Team Fuzile plans to be back in the ring in April. It's still unclear who'll be in the opposite corner for that eliminator, but based on the current rankings, Japan's Kenichi Ogawa seems the likely candidate.

A loss isn't the end of the world: fighters can use it as a learning experience and come back stronger. Dealing with the psychological aspects of being knocked out is harder, but history shows that it can be done.

Heavyweight great Joe Louis did just that after being knocked out by Max Schmeling. Closer to home, Zolani Tete was stopped by Moruti Mthalane and went on to become a two-weight world champion.



MCHUNU READY TO DEFEND TITLE

The bid of WBC Silver cruiserweight champion, Thabiso "The Rock" Mchunu, to defend his title as the final deal with his opponent is at an advanced stage. He may take on a Belgium opponent and the fight could be staged in Saudi Arabia.

"The discussion's taking place behind closed doors and the announcement will be made soon about the details of the fight. It may happen in April or May," says Mchunu.

This will be his first title defence after dethroning Denis Lebedev in Russia. Lebedev has since quit.

Mchunu is ranked No 1 and had the advantage in fighting for the WBC cruiserweight. The title was won by South African-based Congolese, Ilunga "Junior" Makabu.

"It's a prospect fight and, given a chance to contend for the title, will take both hands. But let's wait for the decision by the hierarchy," he says.

Mchunu has previously won the SA and ABU titles in his 12-year career.

REJUVENATED MBANGATHA AIMS FOR THE STARS



Featherweight Thembani Mbangatha is a cool and collected customer who prefers to do his talking in the ring. Born in Qumbu in the Eastern Cape, he moved to Cape Town at a young age and found the fight game. “It was a very easy thing for me to start boxing. We were a bunch of young boys together, just doing this and that, so I went to the gym with my friends,” he says. What followed was an amateur career of 40-odd fights (he doesn’t recall the exact number) and competing at both the Western Province and national championships.

He turned pro in 2014. “My role model is always Mzonke Fana [former two-time IBF Junior Lightweight world champion]. We were both originally from Qumbu and moved to Cape Town, so you always heard his name around there.”

His relationship with his trainer, Steven Newton, has a unique back story. They were competing together as amateurs and when Newton decided he was done with being a boxer, he slipped into the role of Mbangatha’s trainer.

Asked what his toughest fight was, Mbangatha grins. “My first pro fight against Sakhumzi Ngqakatha was very tough. He beat me in the finals of the Western Cape championships and we both competed in the nationals. That was a difficult match.” Mbangatha managed to reverse his amateur loss, winning a decision.

He also rates his win over Mayihlomo Mjonono in 2017 for the WBF Africa title as a difficult one. It marked the onset of trouble with his right shoulder, which was dislocated during the fight. “It wasn’t only that - the fight was at Wynberg [Military Base] and it was the first time I’d dealt with a big crowd and fans who expect things from you,” he says. His shoulder injury would resurface in February 2019 when it slipped out of the socket midway through his fight with tough Doctor Ntsele. The shoulder was popped back in between rounds and he managed to outbox Ntsele, one-handed, for the rest of the fight. “This time I knew what was happening and could deal with it. It wasn’t as much of a shock as the first time.”

Nevertheless, the injury would persist and Mbangatha had to undergo surgery. The operation and rehabilitation process kept him out of the ring until December and his return to the ring was no walk in the park either, as he faced Eastern Cape fighter, Aphiwe Masengwana, in a featherweight eliminator for the vacant South African title.

Mbangatha was in fine form and overcame his more experienced opponent in three rounds, bringing his record to 11-0 with five stoppages. His right hand was finally working, whether thrown as an uppercut or a straight punch. “I’ve always had it. My style is to come forward, so I use power. It was just that I’ve been in fights where my opponents’ styles forced me to box.” He’s also known for his high work rate, which earned him the nickname of “Baby Jake”, after the late, legendary Baby Jake Matlala.

His career’s had many interruptions, not only through injury, but also through his work as a policeman, which resulted in him sitting out in 2015 while he underwent basic training.

Now Mbangatha seems to finally have the momentum behind him and is slated to face fellow undefeated Cape Town boxer, Abdulaziz Kunert, on 18 April in a fight that was supposed to be for the South African title. Boxing South Africa (BSA) has since disputed that, claiming Kunert doesn’t qualify and that he should face Eastern Cape fighter Asanda Gingqi instead. At the time of writing, Savva Savvas, promoter of both Kunert and Mbangatha, is appealing the BSA decision.

Whether the fight is for the national title or not, Mbangatha and Newton are adamant that they’re going ahead with the Kunert match.

FURY DESTROYS WILDER IN SEVEN ROUNDS FOR HEAVYWEIGHT SUPREMACY!



Tyson Fury entered the MGM Grand in Las Vegas sitting on a throne, symbolising his often maligned status as lineal heavyweight champion, but he proved that he's indeed heavyweight royalty when he delivered a career best performance, stopping Deontay Wilder at the 1:39 mark of the seventh round to win the WBC world title, as well as the vacant ring belt.

With both fighters weighing significantly more than they did at their first encounter, Fury got off to a quick start, forsaking his usual smart boxing for a more aggressive approach. Wilder landed two glancing rights before Fury stunned him with a right of his own, landing another left towards the end of the round.

A battle of the jabs ensued in the second stanza, Wilder landing another right that had Fury briefly tying up. The exchange of rights continued, Fury landing his own when Wilder had his back to the ropes. The fight heated up, with both men trading punches at the end of the round. It would be Wilder's last stand.

Fury stunned Wilder with a solid one-two in the third and snapped his opponent's head back with a dominating jab. Then came the moment many didn't expect: Fury dropped Wilder on his back with a right to the ear. A wobbly Wilder got up, but moments later deposited himself back on the canvas when he missed a punch, trying to retaliate. With blood starting to flow from his left ear between rounds, things were looking bleak for the "Bronze Bomber".

Fury found the mark in the fourth with his left hook as the pace slowed somewhat, giving a vulnerable Wilder a brief respite. It wasn't to last, though, as Fury hurt him again with a straight right in the fifth and landed a hard uppercut in close before falling into a clinch. A double left hook to the head and body from Fury put Wilder down for a second time. If nothing else, Wilder was all heart as he got up once again.

If ever Wilder needed his big right hand that put 41 previous opponents to sleep, he needed it now, but Fury was firmly in control, giving Wilder a systematic beating in the sixth. He landed another head snapping right and got the better of an exchange of uppercuts on the inside. When another left hook, - followed by a straight right from Fury - found the mark, one had to wonder how much longer the fight could continue.

As it turned out, not much longer at all.

Fury put a groggy Wilder in the corner in the seventh round, nailing him with two successive straight rights, followed by a right to the body and a left hook to the head. Wilder's corner had seen enough. The towel was tossed into the ring and referee Kenny Bayless jumped in to stop the fight.

No-one had believed Fury when he'd said he'd stop the knockout artist. Everyone thought it was just mind games, but that's the beauty of boxing: anything can happen.

Wilder deserves respect for showing tremendous heart in battling through what appeared to be a ruptured eardrum, but he never looked as if he was winning. There's a rematch clause in their contract, so a third meeting between the pair seems likely, but Wilder will have to make serious adjustments to have any hope of reversing his defeat.

All hail to the "Gypsy King", Tyson Fury!

STUDDARD NARROWLY DEFEATS HLUNGWANE

Joshua "TKO" Studdard won a fight against Soul Hlungwane on a split-point decision. After two years of lay-off with hand injury in a fight against Rofhiwa Nemushuna in December 2017, Studdard is back with a bang and aiming to win titles.

Dressed in a T-shirt bearing his name, the charismatic boxer from Sophiatown was a crowd-puller at a tournament staged by DRB Promotions at Johannesburg's Turffontein Racecourse.

He boasts eight wins with six knockouts. In his highly contested fight against Hlungwane, he showed consistent aggression, with his opponent lacking the power to hurt him. However, Studdard had a point deducted by referee Pumzile Zinakile after a foul.

In another fight, Shone Edwin van Schalkwyk won by TKO in the second round, beating Sando Jackson. Abel Ndaba won by TKO against Masanda Mavumengwa in the fourth round. Lybon Ntshani and Kalele Kadumbu ended their bout in a draw decision, while in a huge upset fight, Raymond Kupula beat Thompson Mokwana on a split-point decision.









STEVE NEWTON AND SIKELE-LA MNGUNI – THE NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK?



Big things often start small and that may be the case for a new boxing gym, located in Leo Street in the Cape Town suburb of Elfindale. It's a small, but neat establishment, set up in a converted warehouse with a ring and all the basic boxing gear.

Coach Steve Newton has an interesting background story and his enthusiasm for the sport is infectious. He had about 25 amateur fights himself, competing at the South African championships twice, losing to former South African middleweight champion, Walter Dlamini, in the final in 2011 and then running into light heavyweight contender, Luvuyo Sizani, the following year.

He says his decision to stop boxing and turn to coaching instead was prompted by aesthetic reasons. "I was working as a financial planner and I was always full of bruises, so it wasn't very professional to look like that when seeing clients. I also broke my nose twice and had it sitting on the side of my face. Both times I required surgery, so I decided I couldn't really work like that."

Newton's best known in Cape Town for being the trainer of professional featherweight Thembani Mbangatha, but – as he explains – you can't only depend on the professionals to pay the bills. Along with the usual fitness crowd, a small group of amateurs started training there too.

The most experienced of them is a polite young man by the name of Sikelela Mnguni. If his surname sounds familiar, there's a good reason for it. He's the nephew of Mdantsane's famous "Giant Killer", legendary trainer Mzimasi Mnguni. The elder Mnguni trained a slew of world champions, among them the likes of Welcome Ncita, Vuyani Bungu, Mbulelo Botile and Zolani Petelo.

Sikelela's had more than 40 amateur bouts and has competed at the regional championships, where he was awarded the "Best Boxer" trophy in one of the qualifying tournaments.

He currently tips the scales at 49kg, which is around the strawweight limit. Asked if he plans to turn professional, he glances at Newton. "We decided to stay another year in the amateurs. Next year we're going to turn pro," he says.

May he be blessed.

Sikelela prefers training to talking and after posing for a photo, he gets stuck into the heavy bag, the sound of his blows building up to a fast rhythm. Is it the sound of future success?

Only time will tell.

LEOPENG: FROM PSYCHOLOGY TO SPARRING



Leopeng training at the HotBox gym under the supervision of Vusi Mtolo and Colin Nathan.

Bandile "Leogold" Leopeng is a man with a double life. In one, he's a professional boxer who shows no mercy to his opponents. In the other, he's a professional counselling psychologist – registered with the Health Professions Council of SA – who must carry the emotions and frustrations of his clients.

He's in the minimum weight division and has 39 fights at amateur level.

Leopeng won a silver medal at University Sports SA in 2013. He participated in the Gauteng North and Johannesburg Championships in 2016 and 2017 respectively. He's currently a sparring partner to Hekkie Budler.

"I'm ready to fight for the provincial titles and hope to be ranked in the top 10 so that I'm able to fight for the South African title by the end of the year," he says.



NORTH WEST PROVINCE BOXERS TURN PROFESSIONAL

Boxing South Africa has completed the Sparring programme as part of developing the sport. in South Africa. Gauteng tops the list, with more than 45 registered as professional boxers. The boxers will still have to pass medical fitness.

BSA's Provincial Manager, Lehlohonolo Ramagole, was in charge of sparring in five

Provinces, which also included Limpopo, Northern Cape, North West and Free State.

"In the five provinces which participated in Sparring, we registered more than 100 boxers. They'll have to accumulate a number of fights to contest for provincial titles and rank in the top 10 for South African national titles," he says.

BSA's Boxing licensing registration and renewal ends on 31 March.

Any South African national and provincial champions who fail to renew their licences may

end up forfeiting their titles, which will then be declared vacant.



IN THE RING AT ORKNEY



Sparring in North West Province at Orkney, Vaal Reef Community Hall was a fully packed activity with upcoming boxers showing their skills in the ring.

The Boxing Club from across the province including Armstrong Boxing Club, Marikana Boxing Club, Boitekong Boxing Club, Sondela Boxing Club and Sunrise Boxing Club had their athletes qualified to be registered as professional boxers.

Armstrong Boxing Club: Kamogelo Thupe, Johannes Motsumi, Kholisile Mhlekazi, Olerato Phawe, Letlhogonolo Nxina, Kagiso Sithole, Bonolo Tlhapi, Paballo Bereng, Oageng Legote,Ndidi Molaodi.

Marikana Boxing Club, Boitekong Boxing Club , Sindelar Boxing Club and Sunrise Boxing Club boxers at the Orkney, Vaal Reef Community Hall: Zimvu Cabe, Mothosi Sekano, Anthatile Cossa, Onke Khanzi, Ntsikelelo Springung, Mzoxolo Gobo (Coach) Aubrey Vithi (Coach).

Female Boxers to turn professional depending on medical requirement by BSA.Dawn Deutschmann, Simon Sazisiwe, Gladies Letsana (Coach) Boniswa Manyadi.



RYNO LIEBENBERG HANGS UP HIS GLOVES

South African boxing hero Ryno Liebenberg has bidden farewell to a boxing career of more than a decade. He featured against Congolese fighter Alex Kabangu at the tournament staged by Charing Cross Promotions at Balgownie Community Hall.

Liebenberg (36) has previously held the SA Super Middleweight, IBO All Africa and Intercontinental, WBC Intercontinental Silver and International Light Heavyweight titles.

His last title fight was when he failed to reclaim the WBC Intercontinental Light Heavyweight belt from Nick Hannig in Germany.

Speculation about a fight against SA and IBO Super Middleweight title-holder Rowan Campbell sparked a social media war against trainers. However, no confirmation of such a fight has yet been confirmed.

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KNOCKOUTS AT "THE RUMBLE AFRICA"



Ronald "The King" Malindi made his third successful SA Bantamweight title defence against Lwandile Sityatha, winning on a unanimous point decision. The fight was the main bout at the Orient Theatre in East London.

The highly contested match went to 12 rounds, with both fighters taking blows to the delight of the crowd at a fully packed venue. Malindi is also the ABU champion and has now registered his 17th undefeated fight.

In another fight, Sivenathi Nontshinga scored a fifth-round knockout against the highly-rated Ivan Soriano from the Philippines to retain the IBF Intercontinental Junior Flyweight title.

Yanga Sgqibo scored a seventh-round stoppage fight against Cris Paulino to retain his WBO Intercontinental Junior Bantamweight belt. This was a bonus win, after the fight was nearly stopped by his previous promoters, Xaba Promotions, in court on the grounds that the contract for the match was invalid.

In an ABU Featherweight title fight, Lerato Dlamini beat Zimbabwean Jeremiah Mhere in the third round.

Hard-hitting, Asanda Gingqi beat Thato Bonokoane on points for the ABU SADC Junior Featherweight title.

DUBE READY FOR SA TITLE

Junior featherweight division boxer Cain Dube has a pressure record at amateur with 20 fights and no loss.

He turned professional in 2016 and only had two fights in 2019. One was against Sabelo Mazibuko, which he won on points and the other was against Fani Mnguni, which he won in the fourth round with a knockout.

Dube is trained by Vusi Mtolo and is part of the team at HotBox.

"There are many experienced boxers at the gym and coaches dedicate their time to improving our skills," he says.

Mtolo believes Dube is ready to campaign in the division.

"We have to take it step by step. He needs to settle in the division and win South African titles. Then he can work towards world ones," he says.



LONG ROAD TO THE RING

KwaZulu-Natal boxer Ayabonga Mhlati had to travel long distances to fulfil his dreams.

Mhlati was one of the amateur boxers who were recommended to be registered as professional boxers at Vaal Reef, North West Province.

"I started training boxing at primary school, but stopped after the passing of my parents. It's been a tough time and in the village, boxing isn't active," he says.

A friend of his offered to pay his travelling costs to Johannesburg so that he could pursue his dream of becoming a professional boxer.

"I heard about the Sparring at North West Province and knew I had to take this opportunity. I'm happy that Boxing SA has acknowledged my skills so that I can register as a professional," he says.

Mhlati intends to work hard at the gym to contest for the provincial and South African titles.



MEET KAINE FOURIE, ANOTHER PROSPECTIVE BOXER



Well-known boxing trainer Gert Strydom is to unleash another talented young hopeful, Kaine Fourie.

At just 18 years of age, Fourie is a lightweight division boxer set to make his professional debut next month. He's had eight fights at amateur level, with six wins.

He's been a sparring partner to most of the well-known boxers, including Motruti Mthalane prior to his title defence in Japan.

"I have get good advice from my trainer, like how to manage the ring, footwork and counter-punches. This helps when you come up against an opponent in the ring," says Fourie.

Strydom expects the young boxer to raise the South African flag high. "Kaine's is a dedicated young fighter and will rock the SA lightweight division. He has power in both hands," he says.

He's preparing Fourie to compete for a world title in the next two years. "We're waiting for the finalisation of the prospect fight and the name of the boxer next month. That will be the starting point for achieiving our goals," he says.



DAKAR OPENS DOORS TO OLYMPIC TOKYO 2020





The best boxers from African continent - 198 athletes from 38 nations competed for 33 Olympic quota places at Tokyo 2020.

Atlanta 1996 Olympic champion Wladimir Klitschko from Ukraine was the IOC BTF champion. The super heavyweight legend joined other athletes Ambassadors in an effort to promote the sports. The Tokyo 2020 boxing tournament will feature 286 boxers(186 men and 100 women) competing in thirteen weight divisions.

A total of 16 nations won medals with. Morocco finished with eight medals, four gold and four bronzes, Algeria followed with eight medals, three gold, four silver and one bronze. Algeria topped the quota places chart with seven Olympic berths. Cameroon finished in third place with two gold's and one bronze.

Olympic Tokyo 2020 Qualifying Boxers.

WOMEN SECTION:

Middleweight (69kg - 75kg); Mardi Khadija(Morocco), Gramane Rody Adosinda; **Welterweight(64kg - 69kg);** Bel AHbib Oumayma(Morocco), Panguana Acinda Helena(Mozambique). **Lightweight(57kg - 60kg);** Khelif Imane(Algeria), Homrani Epzayani(Tunisia). **Featherweight(54kg - 57kg)** Alimi EP Moulahi Khouloud(Tunisia), Kenosi Keamogetse Sadie(Botswana). **Flyweight(48kg - 51kg);** Cheddar Rabab(Morocco) , Boulam Roumaysa(Algeria), Ongare Christine (Kenya).

MEN SECTIONS:

Super Heavyweight (91kg - +91kg); Yegnong Njieyo Maxme(Cameroon), Bouloudinats Chouaib(Algeria); **Heavyweight division(81kg - 91kg),** Baalla Youness (Morocco), Benchabla Abdelnafd(Algeria), **Light Heavyweight(75kg - 82kg;** Salah Orebi Abdelgawward, (Egypt), Houmri Mohammed(Algeria) Assaghir Mohammed(Morocco) **Middleweight(69kg - 75kg);** Nemouchi You need(Algeria), Tshama David, Seyi Ntsengue Dieudonne(Cameroon); **Welterweight(63kg - 69kg);** Mengue Ayissi Albert(Cameroon), Zimba Stephen(Zambia) Bwogi Shadiri(Uganda), **Lightweight(57kg - 63kg)** Jonas Jonas(Namibia), Colin Louis Richarno, Nadir Abderhaar(Morocco); **Featherweight(52kg - 57kg);** Mulenga Everisto(Zambia), Okoth Nicholas Okongo(Kenya), Takyi Samuel(Ghana). **Flyweight(48kg - 57kg);** Flissi Mohammed(Algeria), Chinyemba Patrick(Zambia), Salemanu Tetteh(Ghana).

Other Continental events will take place with London, Britain 14 - 25 March; Buenos Aires, Argentina 26 - 3 April and Paris, France 13 - 20 May 2020.

HEADDA THE SHREDDER

Hedda "The Shredder" Wolmarans is the South African Junior Welterweight female boxing champion. She defeated Nomandithini Ndyambo, who retired before the second round.

She'll be putting her title on stake next month.

Wolmarans is the only female boxer at Hotbox Gym under trainers Vusi Mhlongo and Colin "Nomakanjani" Nathan. She studied sports management and sports science.

Wolmarans believes female boxers should be given televised fights. "There'll be no development if female boxers aren't given the opportunity. Female boxers should also be given exposure and that will excite other women to join the sport. Every day, every month, should be for active women boxers – not only August," she says.

Wolmarans hasn't lost in her last five fights and boxers in her division fear her. "I don't have many challengers, so we may look at opponents outside the country, or perhaps go continental or to the world championship," she says.

Nathan says "The Shredder" is busy at the gym and more fights are in the pipeline.



TSHABALALA AND NCUBE READY TO BATTLE IT OUT



Former WBF female world champion Gabisile "Simply the Best" Tshabalala is ready to redeem herself in a non-title fight against Sindiswa Ncube at the Human Rights Boxing Tournament hosted by TLB Promotions' "Night of the Big Guns", in collaboration with the Gauteng Department of Sports, Recreation, Arts & Culture on 28 March at Riviera on the Vaal.

She's gone four fights without a win. "I'm ready for this fight and I'll be in it to the last round. I've been without a win for a long time and I think this is the time to turn things around," she says.

Tshabalala's and Ncube's six-round bout will be followed by a fight between Bathabile Ziqubu and Sisipho Dyiwariya for the Female Junior Featherweight title in a four-round match.

Tshabalala, in the bantamweight division, lost her last fight against Mtshidiso Mokebisi and Simangele Hadebe, while Ncube lost her fight against Melissa Miller and Mokebisi. "Simply the Best" was stripped of her title after failing to defend the belt within the stipulated period, which is usually six months.

She also failed in her bid for the WBC belt when stopped in the first round by bantamweight champion Catherine Phiri.

The bouts will be part of the tournament, with Hekkie Budler returning to the ring after a long lay-off to face Ricardo Sueno from the Philippines. In another fight, Thulani Mbenge will face off with Kuvesa Katembo for the vacant ABU Welterweight title.





WOMEN BOXERS PACKING A PUNCH

While boxing is often thought as a male-dominated sport, many female boxers have also played a prominent role in their countries and continents







Women's boxing has come a long way to reach the renowned status of its male counterpart. There are many female punchers worthy of acclaim. They're world champions and are inspiring many young would-be lady fighters to put on their gloves.

Cecelia Braekhus
The former kickboxer has been the undisputed women's welterweight champion since 2014. Undefeated in 31 professional fights, she's the first female boxer in any weight division to simultaneously hold the WBC, WBA, IBF and WBO titles. Braekhus won the WBA and WBC belts in her 11th professional bout.

Bokiwe Nonina
Nonina is South Africa's most decorated female boxer. She was the Female Boxer of the Year at the BSA awards in both 2016 and 2017 and defended the WBF bantamweight belt twice before relinquishing it.

Pearl Morake
Morake become the first female in Botswana to represent her country at international level and was its national champion on four occasions. She competed at the 2014 Commonwealth Games.

Monalisa Sibanda
This top Zimbabwean female boxer turned professional in 2005 and has since scored major breakthroughs in her career by clinching the Women's International Boxing Association title, defeating Joyce Awimo of Kenya. Sibanda has knocked out South Africa's Queen Tshabalala and defeated Zambian icon Esther Phiri for the unification of the WIBA's and Women International Boxing Organisation's Light Welterweight belts.







Anisha Basheel
The Malawian top female boxer lost her WBC eliminator against UK-based Chantelle Cameron. Basheel had gone eight fights without a loss. She held the Commonwealth Female Lightweight and the ABU Female Super Feather-weight titles.

Claressa Shields
Shields made history as the fastest female fighter to win world titles in three separate divisions in just 10 fights. She won the WBO and WBC Junior Middleweight Shields titles and now aims to notch up another record having first match at the MMA against top-class fighter Amanda Nunes. That would probably be the biggest women's boxing bout of the century.



Nosiacwase Dube and Lufuno Mutshayi in an explosive fight at Turffontein Racecourse, Johannesburg.

DUBE AND MUTSHAYI SHOWCASE BOXING TALENT



Nosiacwase Dube and Lufuno Mutshayi engaged in a four-round battle that ended in a draw (the vote of two of the judges, with the third scoring in favour of Mutshayi) at Johannesburg's Turffontein Racecourse.

The women exchanged blows to a standing ovation from the crowd. It was Mutshayi's second fight after losing in her professional boxing debut. She hails from Venda, Limpopo Province.

The square-off was also Dube's second fight after a first defeat. She had more than 20 fights at amateur level, winning silver medals at the National Tournaments in 2012 and 2013.

Dube signed under African Child Events & Promotions for management. The organisation's Michael Sediane praised her excellent performance in the ring. "Nosiacwase had only two weeks to prepare for the fight. Our aim is to get four fights so that she'll be ready to challenge for the bantamweight or featherweight. The next fight is in April and I hope to get two other fights before August," he added.

Manny Fernandos also praised his boxer, Mutshayi, for her performance. "The whole fight had the crowd on their feet, which means the women boxed really well," he said.

TAMRIN RAYNOR: YOUNGEST FEMALE BOXING COACH



Tamrin Raynor from Unleashed Sports is a young female coach in a largely male-dominated sport. She's an assistant coach to the former boxer and now trainer, Lionel Hunter. The stable includes professional boxers like Smangele Hadebe, Lebo Matsuabo, Faraday Mukandila, Siyabonga Mabena, Kabandani Bukasa, Walter Dlamini and Kholosa Ndabayini.

Raynor first became involved in boxing at the age of 15 and has since been licensed as a professional coach by BSA. "I grew up surrounded by people involved in boxing and my interest was to become a boxer as well, but I soon realised I could do more good by supporting fighters," she says.

"It's a challenging sport, so you need to work hard and be dedicated to it. The biggest challenge is having to continually encourage and motivate boxers in the ring."

While she hopes to be a role model to other young females in the boxing sphere, she adds that women need to prove they can do it, rather than be given opportunities simply because of their gender. "We have female promoters, ring officials and boxers, which proves that more women are interested in the sport," says Raynor. Her ultimate aim is to train a female world champion in South Africa.

Hunter is happy with Raynor's corner role. "Tamrin comes up with new ideas and techniques. Most importantly, she can relate to boxers. Every coach in all sporting disciplines needs to work with people who are dedicated," he says. Likewise, every boxer needs a dedicated coach.

SOUTH AFRICAN FEMALE RATINGS - AS AT JANUARY 31 2019

	HEAVYWEIGHT	> 91.16kg	
	SA champion:	Vacant	
1	n/a		

	JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT	79.38 to 91.16kg	
	SA champion:	Vacant	
1	n/a		

	LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT	76.2 to 79.387kg	
	SA champion:	Vacant	
1	n/a		

	SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT	72.58 to 76.2kg	
	SA champion:	Vacant	
1	n/a		

	MIDDLEWEIGHT	69.85 to 72.58kg	
	SA champion:	Mapule Ngubane (G)	Last def: Mar 16
1	n/a		

	JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT	66.68 to 69.85kg	
	SA champion:	Vacant	
	WBF champion:	Noni Tenge (E)	Last def: Sep 17
1	Mapule Ngubane (G)		

	WELTERWEIGHT	63.5 to 66.68kg	
	SA champion:	Julie Tshabalala (G)	Last def: Mar 17
1	Nomadithini Ndyamba		

	JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT	61.24 to 63.5kg	
	SA champion:	Hedda Wolmarans G	Won : Aug 19
1	Nomadithini Ndyamba		

	LIGHTWEIGHT	58.97 to 61.24kg	
	SA champion:	Ndabayani Kholoso G	Last def: May 19
1	Bonita van Jaarsveld (G)		
2	Raider Muleba (G)		

	JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT	57.15 to 58.97kg	
	SA champion:	Nozipho Bell (WBF)	Last def: Aug 17
1	Sithandiwe Ng-cobo (K)		

	FEATHER-WEIGHT	55.34 to 57.15kg	
	SA champion:	Asandisa Nxokwana	Last def: Aug 17
	WBF champion	Nozipho Bell (E)	Won: Mar 19
1	Matshidido Mokebisi (G)	ABU SADC	Sindiswe Ncube
2	Unathi Myekeni (E)		

	JNR FEATHER-WEIGHT	53.52 to 55.34kg	
	SA champion:	Matshidiso Mokebisi	Last def: Jul 1
1	Gabisile Tshaba-lala (F)		

	BANTAM-WEIGHT	52.16 to 53.52kg	
	SA champion:	Melissa Miller (G)	Last def: Mar 19
	International:	Bukiwe Nonina (L)	
1	Sharadene Fortuin (E)	IBO Intercontinental	Nathaline Bania
2	Asandisa Nxokwana (E)		

	JNR BANTAM-WEIGHT	50.8 to 52.16kg	
	SA champion:	Vacant	
1	Simangele Hadebe (G)	ABU SADC	
2	Thema Zuma (K)		

	FLYWEIGHT	48.99 to 50.8kg	
	SA champion:	Noxolo Makhanavu E	Last def: Aug 17
1	Siphosethu Nxazonke (E)		

	JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT	47.62 to 48.99kg	
	SA champion:	Nozwelethu Mathontsi	Last def: Aug 17
1	Nthabiseng Didi (E)	EP mini fly	
2	Nothuthuzele Chitani (G)		

	MINI FLYWEIGHT	47.63kg	
	SA champion:	Vacant	
1	n/a		
2			



EUBANK JR VACATES IBO TITLE

Chris Eubank Jr has vacated his IBO World Super Middleweight title after beating Matt Korobov to lift the WBA interim title. Two British boxers in line for the title – top contender Rocky Fielding and second-rated John Ryder – to battle it out for the Super Middleweight title.

Fielding lost his first defence of the title against Saul Alvarez, while Ryder has held the WBA Interim Super Middleweight since last year.

KOSEI TANAKA VACATES WBO FLYWEIGHT TITLE, LIKELY TO PURSUE JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT HONOURS



Unbeaten Japanese star Kosei Tanaka vacated his WBO flyweight title. Tanaka, rated No 1, has held the title since outpointing Sho Kimura in September 2018 and has made three successful defences.

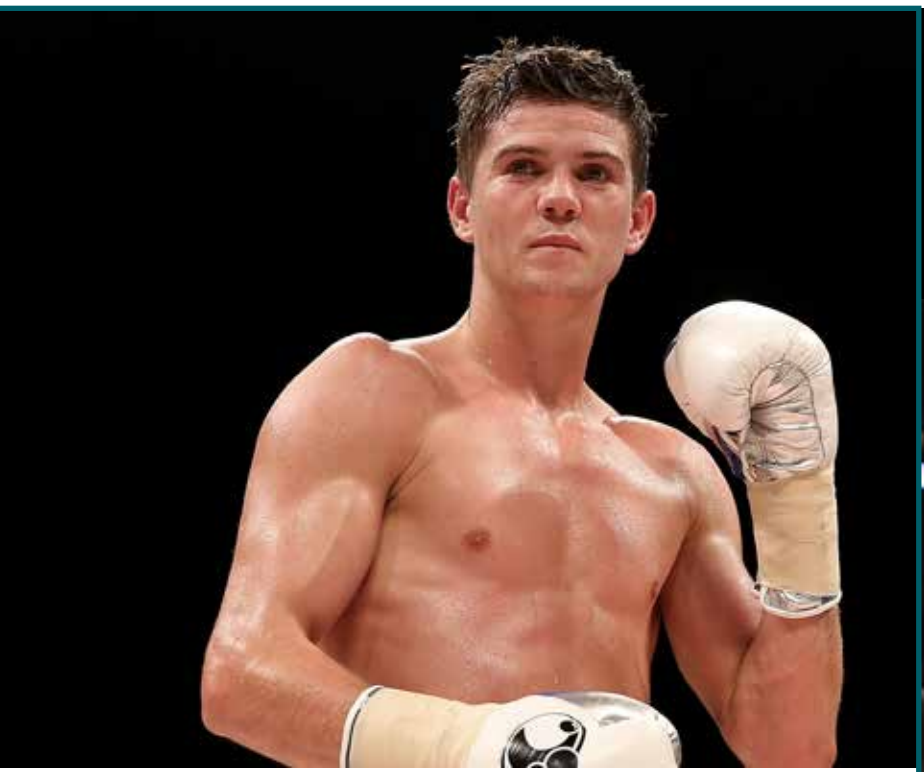
The 24-year-old is a three-weight world titleholder, having held the WBO belt at strawweight, junior flyweight and flyweight.

Tanaka is struggling to make flyweight and will attempt to claim a fourth title at junior bantamweight, perhaps at the expense of countryman and WBO titleholder Kazuto Ioka.

Ioka and Tanaka have long been on a collision course and look likely, as both men gear up for an all-Japanese superfight later this year.

The top two positions to fill the WBO flyweight title vacancy are occupied by No 1, Giemel Magramo and No 2, Angel Acosta.

HOOKER AND CAMPBELL TO REDEEM THEIR CAREERS





Maurice Hooker and Regis Prograis will battle out for the junior welterweight, while Luke Campbell and Javier Fortuna will content for the vacant lightweight title,

Hooker and Prograis both lost their belts and unbeaten records in separate title unification bouts. Hooker suffered a sixth-round knockout at the hands of Jose Ramirez.

The 30-year-old scored a first-round knockout of overmatched Uriel Perez to mark his first bout under new trainer, Brian “Bomac” McIntyre.

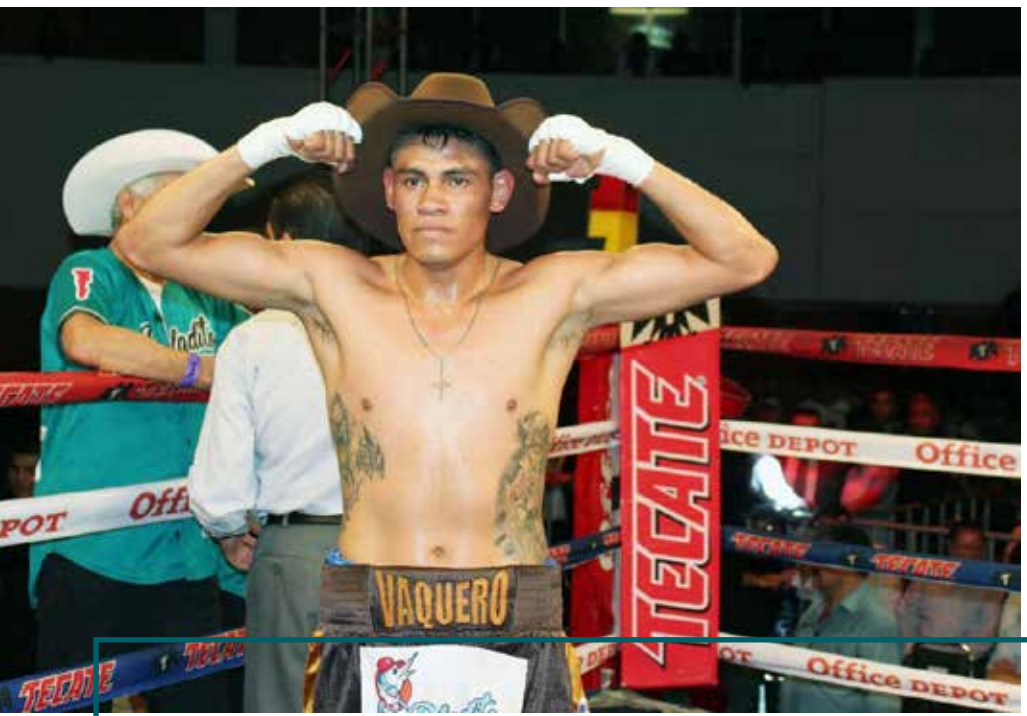
Fortuna will take his second swing at becoming a three-division title-holder, while Campbell hopes for third time lucky at a first career title reign.

Fortuna, a former featherweight and junior lightweight title-holder, made his way to the top of the WBC lightweight rankings following a two-round wipe-out of former featherweight title-holder Jesus Cuellar.

Campbell dropped a 12-round decision to Vasyl Lomachenko in their three-belt lightweight fight. The loss served as his most recent ring appearance, as well as his second unsuccessful bid at capturing a lightweight title.

The lightweight title at stake became available when Devin Haney vacated in order to undergo shoulder surgery, which will put him out of the ring through the first half of this year. Haney will be in line to face the winner, should he opt to return to lightweight once given a clean bill of health.

MARTINI AND NAVARRETE RETAIN TITLES



In one of the undercards of the heavyweight title fight between Deontay Wilder and Tyson Fury, WBO junior featherweight champion Emmanuel Navarrete retained his title. It was his fifth title defence and he stopped Jeo Santisima in the 11th round.

Navarrete dominated the fight from southpaw stance, giving the challenger no space. The referee stopped the fight at the end of the 11th round. Navarrete proved his record to 31-1-27.

On the same card, former IBF Heavyweight champion Charles Martini won a sixth-round stoppage in an IBF heavyweight title eliminator against Gerald Washington

Sebastian Fundera won a unanimous decision against Daniel Lewis during their 10-round junior middleweight title fight. Javier Molina recorded the most important victory of his 10-year career as a professional boxer, winning by unanimous decision in an eight-round welterweight bout.



FANLONG TO LIFT CHINA'S SPIRIT





China's Meng Fanlong will fight IBF and WBF light heavyweight champion Artur Beterbiev.

He is regarded as the world's best Chinese fighter and the first boxer to fight for the light heavyweight championship.

Fanlong is a southpaw who won a unanimous decision against Adam Deines to become Beterbiev's mandatory challenger.

Fanlong has been essentially shut down in his country due to the recent COVID-19 outbreak. "I hope with this fight can bring some positivity and joy to my people and put pride in their hearts," he says.

Beterbiev has won all his professional fights by knockout. He is regarded as one of boxing's most devastating punchers and has made three successful defences.

WOMEN TO WATCH







Christine "The Edge" Wolmarans is hoping for an early return to the ring in April. She made her professional debut with a win against Paulwetu Namba as MMA fighter in the EFC. She's ranked sixth of 37 active South African women.

Paulwetu "Power" Namba is a contender in the Women's strawweight division. A life support paramedic, she lists her fight against Wolmarans.

"My goal is to show my skills and get my name as one of the best female fighters in South Africa," she says.

Namba got her nickname because people were struggling to pronounce her name.

She currently teaches first aid, fire-fighting, health and safety to corporates and the public.

Bunmi "The Bone-Bender" Ojewole is ranked in the female bantamweight division and fought Jacqueline Trisse in a non-title bout.

The Nigerian-born fighter, who's studying orthopaedic surgery, won the North American Grappling Association gold medal for female beginners. Ojewole also won the first women's MFC title.



SEABI GUNNING FOR EFC TITLE



Conrad Seabi is ready to be crowned EFC champion and wants to find title-holders in extreme fighting.He last fought Robert Swanepoel and won on a technical knockout.

Seabi says he's ready to fight the winner of the match between he was ready to fight the winner between Takunda "Spartan" Gorimbo and Max Merten.

"I should be fighting Shaun de Lange or Dino Bagattin, but it's been postponed because they don't want to fight me. The problem is that we don't have ranking, which makes it possible for fighters to dodge me. With ranking, you're a contender and have nowhere to hide," says Seabi.

Hailing from Mamelodi, Pretoria, Seabi won the kickboxing African ritle in 2000 and represented the country at the Kickboxing Championship held in Dublin, Ireland, in 2007.

His ambition is to win the title and conquer MMA. "I want to do this not only to represent myself or my family. Mamelodi is a brand, and is represented by Mamelodi Sundowns in soccer. I'll represent it with MMA. The sport is growing and the youth, both boys and girls, can take advantage of that as a career," he said.

Seabi believes sport participation can help youth avoid drugs and gangsterism.

NEW YOUNG WARRIOR



Cameron Saaiman (18) rocked the EFC as the youngest fighter in the bantamweight division. With six wins at amateur level, he made his professional debut against Corné Blom at Times Square Arena in Pretoria in 2019.





JACOBS FANCIED TO STIR TROUBLE

Faeez "The Troublemaker" Jacobs is the current EFC Bantamweight champion. He has seven wins and two losses and is ranked fourth in the SA pro bantamweight division. His last fight was against Nkazimulu Zulu and was won by split decision.

Jacobs trained in martial arts and boxing and started full-time as an MMA fighter at the age of 16. He competed in kick-boxing and was a third-belt champion, with one amateur title. He won the fight in the second round with a TKO.

"ZULU BOY" MISSES OPPORTUNITY

Nkazimulo "Zulu Boy" Zulu is a flyweight division contender with 11 wins and four losses. A southpaw, he missed the opportunity to win the bantamweight title against Faeez Jacobs on a narrow point split decision.

He started training in Kyokushun Karate at the age of six and was the tri-nation champion in 2008. He won South African colours in 2009.



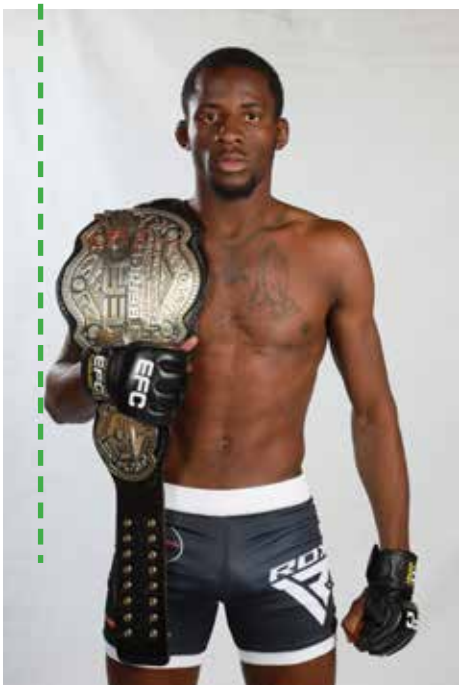


BIKO: AN ORTHODOX WITH SUBMISSIVE STRENGTH

Luthando "Shorty" Biko has six wins and two losses in his career as an EFC contender. His last fight was against Tumisang Madiba, which he won in the third round by split decision.

Biko, a former kickboxing fighter, joined MMA two years ago and has been a force to reckon with in the EFC. He has a black belt in judo and participated in the Commonwealth Judo Championships and the IMMAF African Championships in 2016.

FIGHTERS ON THE RISE







Featherweight champion Igeu “Smiley” will be back in the ring next month. He has 12 wins and only one loss.

He started wrestling at the age of eight and won the AFL Featherweight and SA Youth Wrestling championships.

After 10 wins as an amateur, Kabesa turned professional and made his debut in 2013. He won the featherweight title after a rematch with Danny Henry. He has defended the title twice.

Khulekani “Cold Steel” Hlongwa is in the EFC light heavyweight and middleweight division. He has two wins and four losses.

Kevin “Tug Boat” Koekemoer is in the heavyweight division. His last fight was against Matunga Dukasa, which he lost in a knockout. He has one win and two losses.

BOXING CHAMPIONS

WEIGHT	WBC	WBA	IBF	WBO	IBO
Heavy	Tyson Fury	Anthony Joshua	Anthony Joshua	Anthony Joshua	Anthony Joshua
Cruiser	Ilunga Makabu	Arsen Goulamirian	Yunier Dorticos	Mairis Briedis	Kevin Lerena
Light heavy	Artur Beterbiev	Dmitry Bivol	Artur Beterbiev	VACANT	Sven Fornling
Super middle	David Benavidez	Callum Smith	Caleb Plant	Billy Joe Saunders	Chris Eubank Jr.
Middle	Canelo Alvarez	Canelo Alvarez	Gennadiy Golovkin	Demetrius Andrade	Gennadiy Golovkin
Light middle	Jermell Charlo	Jeison Rosario	Jeison Rosario	Patrick Teixeira	Jeison Rosario
Welter	Errol Spence	Manny Pacquiao	Errol Spence	Terence Crawford	Sebastian Formella
Light welter	Jose Ramirez	Josh Taylor	Josh Taylor	Jose Ramirez	Jeremias Nicolas Ponce
Light	Vasyl Lomachenko	Vasyl Lomachenko	Teofimo Lopez	Vasyl Lomachenko	Vacant
Super feather	Miguel Berchelt	Leo Santa Cruz	Joseph Diaz	Jamel Herring	Vacant
Feather	Gary Russell Jr.	Leo Santa Cruz	Josh Warrington	Shakur Stevenson	Tugstogt Nyambayar
Super bantam	Rey Vargas	M. Akhmadaliev	M. Akhmadaliev	Emanuel Navarrete	Stephen Fulton
Bantam	Nordine Oubaali	Nayoa Inoue	Naoya Inoue	John Reil Casimero	Michell Banquez
Super fly	Juan Francisco Estrada	Kal Yafai	Jerwin Ancajas	Kazuto Ioka	Gideon Buthelezi
Fly	Julio Cesar Martinez	Artem Dalakian	Moruti Mthalane	Kosei Tanaka	Maximo Flores
Light fly	Ken Shiro	Hiroto Kyoguchi	Felix Alvarado	Elwin Soto	Tibo Monabesa
Straw	W. Menayothin	Thammanoon Niyomtrong	Pedro Taduran	Wilfredo Mendez	Vacant




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