

Snips and Snipes 25 January 2018

Fighters progress at different rates and that was shown on the big show at the weekend where Errol Spence was making a defence of his IBF welterweight title and Marcus Browne was fighting in a ten round support fight. Both were members of the US Olympic Team in 2012 which failed to win a medal. Spence was the only one to make it to the quarter-finals and the US had to rely on Claressa Shields to put an American on the podium. Spence is a world champion and Browne despite his 21-0 record is probably a year away from a title fight and his name has yet to come up when discussing challengers for Sergey Kovalev, Adonis Stevenson, Dmitry Bivol and Artur Beterbiev. Despite not winning a medal the US men's team have done well so far as professionals. Rau'shee Warren and Spence have won world title and Terrell Gausha, Mike Hunter and Dominic Breazeale have challenged for world titles. Jose Carlos Ramirez fights Amir Imam for the vacant WBC super light title in March and Joseph Diaz is the No 1 rated feather with the WBC so is in line to challenge Gary Russell, who incidentally qualified for the 2008 Olympics but passed out in the dressing room before his first fight. That only leaves Jamal Herring who was the oldest member of the Team and with a 16-2 record it does not look as though he will progress further. That's not a bad return so far for a Team who were flops in 2012. The British Team in 2012 produced two gold medals from Anthony Joshua and Luke Campbell, silver from Fred Evans and a bronze from Anthony Ogogo. As professionals Joshua has won a world title and Campbell has challenged for one. Not a great return but team members Josh Taylor and Andrew Selby are both closing in on world title shots. Fred Evans has just recently turned pro but Ogogo and team captain Thomas Stalker have struggled as pros.

By failing to make the weight Javier Fortuna threw away his chance to win the IBF lightweight title and rightly so. What I have problem with is that Robert Easter could have lost his title by being defeated by a man who is over the weight limit for the lightweight division. That is against natural justice and when that happens it is purely a commercial consideration. The TV Company, the promoter and the sanctioning body all have a commercial interest in the fight going ahead and the stupidity of having a lightweight title fight when one fighter weighs over the limit for the division is brushed under the carpet. I wonder what would happen if a fighter who lost his title under these circumstances went to court where those involved could try to explain to a judge how it can be a title fight if one guy is inside the weight limit and the other outside. It is right that the guy who does not make weight can't win the title but somehow the guy who is champion and made the weight can lose the title. Money rules all of the time.

OK here comes the big news-both Wlad Klitschko and Vasyl Lomachenko have taken dives-honest. Ok it was in a frozen pool in the Ukraine. It appears to be a tradition on epiphany, the celebration of how the star led the three Kings or Wise men to visit baby Jesus, so panic over. Wlad won on points staying in the water much longer than Vasyl.

No name yet for Lomachenko's opponent on 28 April. The problem is that Lomachenko's opponent has to be a big name but apart from Miguel Berchelt there

are no names at super feather and at light Easter has just defended his title and would not be a draw, Terry Flanagan has moved up and Jorge Linares defends his title against Mercito Gesta with only the WBA title on the line as Gesta is not in the WBC top15. Sometimes a fighter can be too good for his own good.

According to French sources Tony Averlant is to be the next opponent for unbeaten Anthony Yarde with the WBO European and WBO Inter-Continental titles on the line with Bradley Skeete facing Hungarian Laszlo Toth and Daniel Dubois also on the card. It will be an interesting fight if Yarde vs. Averlant does come off as the 6'2" Averlant has won 8 of his last 9 fights and only been beaten twice by KO/TKO, but there is no confirmation of the match so it might just be some French kite flying.

In what may be another bit of French kite flying it was claimed that the WBO are about to put Olympic gold medallist Tony Yoka in their next heavyweight rankings. This after three fights against Travis Clark rated No 201 by BoxRec, Jonathan Rice No 149 and Ali Baghouz No 329. Could even the WBO be so cynical as to jump on that bandwagon? Don't bet against it.

Good to know that Roy Jones is finally going to put away his gloves. Surely one of the most talented fighters of all time it has been a real shame to see him blemishing his legacy by fighting on long past the time when there was any sensible reason to do so. He should have retired after beating Antonio Tarver in 2003 when he was already an eight-time champion over three divisions and 49-1 with his only loss a disqualification. He could have been inducted into the Boxing Hall of Fame in 2008 (You have to have been retired for five years to get on the ballot paper) but hopefully after he beats Scott Sigmon in Pensacola on 8 February he will focus on promoting and get to Canastota in 2023.

As Jones prepares to bow out Felix Sturm prepares to return. The former holder of the IBF, WBA and WBO middleweight and WBA super middleweight titles has said he will fight this year but no date or venue. In February 2016 Sturm tested positive for a banned anabolic steroid following his victory over Fedor Chudinov in a defence of his WBA super middle title. The investigation into the positive test dragged on and Sturm announced in October 2016 that he was vacating the WBA title due to an elbow injury. The WBA dropped the matter and because the WBA did not open proceedings against Sturm the German BDB Federation decided not to move against him. Sturm left Germany for Bosnia, he is of Bosnian descent, but it is not known if he intends to fight there or back in Germany.

The Inglewood show on 24 February just got even more interesting as Donnie Nietes will now defend his IBF flyweight title against Juan Carlos Reveco. The show already has Srisaket defending the WBC super fly title against Juan Francisco Estrada, Brian Viloria tackling Artem Dalakian for the vacant secondary WBA fly title and Carlos Cuadras facing McWilliams Arroyo in what is virtually an eliminator to see who gets to fight the winner between Srisaket and Estrada. It will be good to see Nietes get some high level exposure. The 35-year-old Filipino is unbeaten in 32 fights going back to 2004 when he lost a split decision to an Indonesian in Indonesia. He is a three division champion and is 16-0-1 in 17 world title fights. The 37-year-old Viloria is no spring chicken and this will be his 15th world title fight

Yet another black eye for boxing as Japanese fighter Kenichi Ogawa's pre-fight test before his contests with Tevin Farmer for the vacant IBF super feather title proved positive for a synthetic testosterone in both the A and B samples. His post fight test was clean but the Nevada Commission have issued a suspension which will be in place until a hearing which could be in March. Farmer's team had already protested the controversial decision given to Ogawa and if the Nevada Commission confirms the suspension after the hearing then it seems certain that Ogawa will be stripped off the tile.

Back in Japan the Kameda brothers are aiming to return to action. Koki, a three division champion has not fought since losing to Kohei Kono in a challenge for the WBA super fly title in October 2015. Brother Tomoki, a former undefeated WBO bantamweight champion who lost twice to Jaime McDonnell in challenges for the secondary WBA title is also said to be fighting on the show.

You can't blame Anthony Mundine for calling out Jeff Horn after his win at the weekend. Mundine has been remarkably able to shift between divisions from super welter to cruiser but has never been less than 153lbs. He has put any thought of Horn fight aside for the moment as he and old foe Danny Green are heading for South Africa to take part in an "I'm a Celebrity-Get Me Out of Here " show. Locking Tony and Danny together in a room could have interesting consequences.

Horn fights Terrence Crawford in New York on 14 April as Crawford attempts to win his sixth world title and become a three division champion. A win for Horn would be an even bigger surprise than his win over Manny Pacquiao and I fear for Jeff's title. On the same night in London Billy Joe Saunders will put his WBO middleweight title on the line in an excellent match-up against Martin Murray. With his outclassing of David Lemieux Saunders has greatly increased the possibility of a fight with the winner of Gennady Golovkin vs. Saul Alvarez but Jermall Charlo, Daniel Jacobs, Ryota Murata and Demetrius Andrade are also in the queue. It would be dangerous to look beyond Murray who has had four world title shots and must know there won't be another one if he loses to Saunders. On the same show Terry Flanagan faces a difficult task to become a second division champion as he takes on unbeaten Maurice Hooker for the vacant WBO super light title. Two high class contests. Spaniard Kiko Martinez seems to have been around forever-that's because he turned pro at 18 and has been fighting for 13 years. The former IBF feather champion has ducked no one. He is 7-4-1 in his last 12 fights with the losses being to Carl Frampton, Scott Quigg, Leo Santa Cruz and Josh Warrington. He is back in the picture now being lined-up to challenge fellow Spaniard Marco Vidal for the European feather title and it is a fight he could win.

Imre Szello is looking to remain unbeaten and get some revenge for Hungary when he takes on Denis Grachev in Budapest on February 16. Grachev took a split decision over former undefeated WBO light heavy champion Zsolt Erdei in 2013 spoiling Erdei's chance of joining the elite band of world champions who have retired winning all their fights. Erdei was 33-0 at the time but ended up 34-1. So near yet so far.

The ink was hardly dry on the contract for Juan Carlos Ramirez to fight Amir Imam for the vacant WBC super light title than an interim title fight was agreed. Ridiculous really. In this one on 9 March in Miami Regis Prograis will tackle Viktor Postol. The winner will go on to fight the new champion. Again an abominable misuse of the word interim. Send the WBC a Thesaurus so they can come up with something different such as "a good excuse for another sanctioning fee".

Don King-yes he is still around but only on the fringes-won the purse bidding for the WBC super welter eliminator between Pole Maciej Sulecki 26-0 and Vanes Martirosyan with the winner promised a shot at Jermell Charlo. Something stinks here with Martirosyan not having fought since losing to Erislandy Lara in May 2016. Twenty months inactivity and he climbs from No 3 to No 2 in the ratings.