

Christy Martin's Conqueror

Sumya Anani is a world champion at Lightweight, Light Welterweight, and Welterweight, currently holding the WIBA and IFBA Light Welterweight and IBA and GBU Welterweight belts. She's 23-1-1 with 10 KOs, and both the single loss and draw have been avenged. She was on the under card of the Sanders-Klitschko fight at the Staples Center, and has been on ESPN multiple times, always sporting her distinctive trademark tie-dye colors. She's got a decisive 1998 win over Christy Martin, that sent Christy Martin to the hospital for the first and only time in her career. Sumya Anani is rated #1 in the IFBA, boxrec, and is the champ on boxrec. She was rated above Lucia Rijker in the World Boxing magazine's women's p4p list, and The Ring magazine voted her the best female fighter in the world in 2003.

She's cleaned out a swath of fighters covering 3 weights, and has a win over arguably the best known women's fighter ever, Christy Martin. Rijker, while sitting below Anani in the ratings, prefers to attempt calling out Middleweight Laila Ali than to face the more obvious challenge. This struck me as odd.

Odder still I came across an internet call out in which Anani put her belts on the line against anyone who might stand a chance, including Rijker, Martin, and anyone with a belt or even the heart to face her. No takers.

Sumya was gracious enough to sit down with me for an interview. The usual "how did you get into boxing" and "hey you're a girl!" interview lines seemed completely inappropriate given her world-class credentials.

BB: What is your opinion on a Martin/Ali rematch?

SA: It is Christy Martin's attempt at 'Gold Digging' every dime she can. The fight fans don't want to see a rematch of a mismatch. Her fighting Ali is like Diego Corrales fighting Bernard Hopkins. That would never get sanctioned on the men's side, but because Ali and Martin have the two biggest NAMES in women's boxing, she's hoping to sell it! That's where the money is for her, but that doesn't make a good fight, and it doesn't help the sport of women's boxing. It bugs me that she is CONNING the very fans that pay her paychecks. The hard core boxing fans see through it, but the general public maybe doesn't understand what she's doing.

There are so many worthy female fights. There are many women that aren't getting a chance to be seen....that haven't been afforded a chance to make a NAME. There needs to be more opportunities for the best female fighters to fight on big shows and get exposure, and get the fans excited about seeing them. Promoters need to be willing to pay the top females, otherwise they put on girls that are just beginning because they can pay them cheap.

I think the women who have been in the sport for a long time have a responsibility to help the sport and the girls coming up behind them. Also, the women that are getting exposure have a bigger responsibility. Christy Martin could have really been a catalyst for helping the sport grow. But look at her last 2 fights...mismatches. The most well known female fighter is sacrificing the sport to put money in her bank. And people wonder why women's boxing has faded the last few years. The funny part is she could have done both. She could have helped the sport AND helped herself.

BB: What's going on in your weights? Haven't you pretty much cleaned them out 2-3 times by now?

SA: Yes, the junior welter weight is the most populated. The good part is there are new girls coming in all the time from the amateurs. There's Jane Couch, who I knocked out and who just took two belts from Jamie Clampitt. Clampitt asked for \$12,000.00 to fight me, so she basically said no. She knows that promoters won't pay that. I also challenged Agnieszka Rylik from Poland who has a belt....

BB: Would you fly to Poland to take it?

SA: Sure. I specifically said that I would come to them. I want to fight. I train real hard, I want to be the best boxer I can. I'm having a hard time finding girls to fight me, the matchmakers are having a hard time finding me fights for whatever reason. Maybe some girls just don't want to step up, they want to be known but not fight the best.

BB: What about Rijker?

SA: I think she's scared. I saw her fight Couch, who I knocked out in 4, and Jane worked hard and took Rijker the distance. Lucia's head just

hangs there like a big bobblehead, I'd love to fight her. I guess she'd rather retire undefeated than fight me.

BB: How's she get away with just pretending you aren't there and that Ali is the huge challenge?

SA: The women's boxing game has become all about the NAME. Martin has a NAME because she helped pioneer the sport..... Ali has a NAME for obvious reasons. She is definitely looking for a payday with Ali.Tonya Harding has a name because she's been in the public's eye before.

So Rijker is targeting the NAME fighters. I guess she doesn't care about her reputation. I'm surprised I haven't seen her calling out Tonya Harding yet. (laughs)