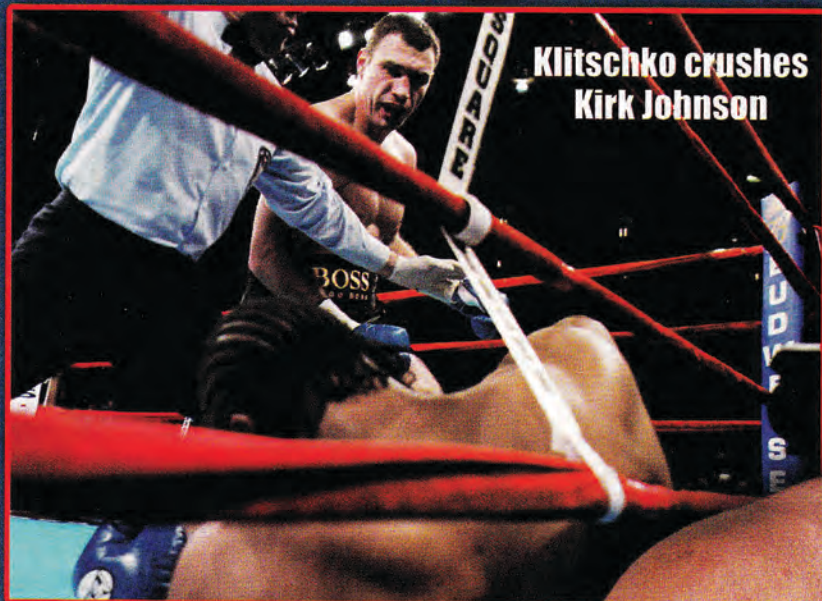


KO SERIES

WORLD Boxing

MAY 2004



Klitschko crushes
Kirk Johnson

**VITALI
KLITSCHKO**
ANOTHER STEP TOWARD
"WORLD DOMINATION"

Display Until March 22

\$5.95 U.S. \$8.95 CANADA £3.95 U.K.



**Women's P-4-P
LAILA NO. 1!**

The Sweeter Science

By JOE SANTOLIKUITO

RANKING THE LADIES

We all like rankings. They stimulate debate and give us a chance to show off our knowledge and argumentative skills.

Some women's alphabet organizations already have rankings, but they don't have a women's pound-for-pound top 10. Therefore, WORLD BOXING has decided to introduce a women's pound-for-pound ranking to accompany this column on a regular basis.

I'm sure the results will cause some to scratch their



Ali debuts on top of the pound-for-pound list

heads and wonder why certain fighters are ranked ahead of others, and why some women weren't included at all. Because this is strictly a subjective ranking, positioning is based on: 1) ability; 2) overall record/record against quality opponents; and 3) activity.

Laila Ali tops the first rankings not only for her four-round demolition of Christy Martin in August 2003, but because over the last two years, no female fighter has been better than Muhammad Ali's daughter.

The 25-year-old Ali, 16-0 (13), beat what many experts felt was a smaller, faded version of Martin. But how many of today's female fighters are capable of dominating Martin the way "She Bee Stingin'" did? How about none?

Two years ago, I thought Ali had no chance against Martin or Lucia Rijker, despite the size disparity. I was under the impression at the time that Ann Wolfe would have annihilated the daughter of "The Greatest." Now Ali is a strong favorite over Wolfe, and because of her size and ability, Ali may also be able to dismantle Rijker the same way she did Martin.

To Ali's credit, she's worked hard at polishing her skills, and unlike her famous daddy, when she has an opponent in trouble, Laila finishes her, instead of playing to the crowd. She's fought a combined six times in '02 and '03, stopping her last five opponents. Question Ali's foes? Her last three opponents had won 84 percent of their fights coming in, with a combined record of 72-12-2.

"I think I'm the best," said Ali, with a good-natured laugh. "I say that because it's about finishing fights and being able to knock someone out. I'm right where I expected to be, and I knew I was going to get better. I studied myself, and I saw this coming. I predicted this would happen. I still study myself, and I still see the things I could do better. I'm a realistic person, and I'm also my worst critic."

Ali reiterated her plan of fighting one or two more years, and then retiring. Right now, Ali is looking to

fight Wolfe—"my George Foreman," as Laila calls her—possibly sometime in early-2004.

Sumya Anani holds the number-two spot. The junior welterweight owns victories over Martin and Andrea DeShong, the woman who handed "The Coal Miner's Daughter" her first career loss. She also recorded a first-round knockout of tough Fredia Gibbs in April '03, and she knocked out Jane Couch in four rounds in June '02. But like many female boxers, Anani, 31, has struggled to stay active.

Sugar Ray Leonard and Oscar De La Hoya have shown interest in promoting Anani, 22-1-1 (10), who has been waiting five years since beating Martin for another big fight. In the meantime, "The Island Girl" has had to settle for off-TV fights and an occasional appearance on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights*.

Anani is second behind Ali because of a bad loss, a six-round split-decision in '00 to Britt Van Buskirk, whose record at the time stood at 7-8-2 (3). But Anani avenged that loss with a 10-round unanimous decision in October '01, then won the rubber match via unanimous decision as well. Her overall abilities make her one of the most avoided female fighters in the world.

"I need to be more active, and I really think sometimes that the networks don't want the sport to succeed," Anani said. "The best women out there aren't being showcased. People need to see what's possible. It's frustrating, not just for me, but for all of the girls."

Lucia Rijker, 16-0 (14), is considered by some experts the best female fighter in the world, but is third on WORLD BOXING's P-4-P list because she has fought only twice since '99. The other glaring reason is that Rijker's last three opponents had won just 53 percent of their fights, with a combined record of 34-28-2 going into their fights with Rijker. That doesn't even compare to the 84 percent Ali's opponents had won, or the 76 percent winning rate of Anani's last three foes, who had a combined 42-11-2 record.

So although Rijker possesses world-class ability, she's rarely shown it against world-class competition. □

WOMEN'S POUND-FOR-POUND RATINGS

(For period ending December 9, 2003)

1. Laila Ali	Super Middleweight	16-0 (13)
2. Sumya Anani	Junior Welterweight	22-1-1 (10)
3. Lucia Rijker	Junior Welterweight	16-0 (14)
4. Christy Martin	Welterweight	45-3-2 (31)
5. Ann Wolfe	Super Middleweight	16-1 (11)
6. Isra Girgrah	Junior Lightweight	26-3-2 (10)
7. Ada Velez	Bantamweight	14-1-2 (6)
8. Chevelle Hallback	Junior Lightweight	20-3-1 (9)
9. Regina Halmich	Flyweight	43-1 (15)
10. Patricia Martinez	Junior Flyweight	12-1 (5)

Eye On The Ladies

Her uncles knew what buttons to push, and they were good at it. So Lisa Brown, then Lisa St. Bernard, would sometimes react with her fists, until her grandmother came and broke everything up. Now anyone on the receiving end of



Brown drills Ada Velez with a left

Brown's fists needs the help of a referee to save them.

Brown, a Canadian bantamweight, got involved with boxing late, at age 26. But she figures after surviving 10 uncles and three brothers growing up in Trinidad, she could endure anything. She's been successful in her 10-fight pro career, going 8-0-2 (3) and winning the IWBf bantamweight title belt.

Brown says her fighting instincts were instilled early.

"I grew up with my grandparents, and my uncles were not much older than me," said Brown, who moved to Toronto in 1988, where she met her husband, former pro fighter Errol Brown. "They would pick on me, and there were a couple of them that we'd go fist-to-fist, and then Grandmom would step in. Fighting was part of survival then. I'm the oldest of four, with three younger brothers, and I was usually the only girl around."

Brown, 32, was also often the only woman who showed up to the gym when she accompanied Errol, a junior middleweight who posted an 8-16-2 (0) record from 1991 to '98. She'd bring a book, rest her feet somewhere comfortable, and read—until one day she decided to get involved.

"Errol encouraged me to get into boxing, but I was inspired by Christy Martin," Lisa said. "For 10 years, I supported him, and one day I decided to go into the gym for a workout. I wanted to spar, and there were two middleweight guys, and I started trading punches with them. I realized that I had some power and I was a little fast. That's how I got into it."

Brown has an active style that she's hoping will one day earn her a bout on a Las Vegas show. Her manager, Warren Rutherford, says that Brown has the skills to gain some attention. But Rutherford also stresses that Brown needs a promoter to get her more fights.

"I'd like to get more publicity and let the world know who Lisa Brown is," she said. "I have no idea how much longer I want to do this, and whatever happens, happens. I'm not going to give up. I'm not going to quit because I don't get enough fights."

If she did, her uncles would never let her hear the end of it.

PHOTO BY SYLVIA PECOTA