

Unknown Anani looks for competition

Female fighter shares spotlight with Manfredy

BY PAUL TREMBACKI
Times Correspondent

GARY – People in the boxing business regard her as one of the best female fighters in the world, but she is virtually an unknown in the public eye.

She is Sumya "The Island Girl" Anani, one of only two women to have beaten Christy Martin, the poster child of women's professional boxing.

After a long layoff, the IFBA Continental junior welterweight champion is eager to get back into the ring, which she will do today at the Majestic Star Casino/Trump Hotel Casino in Gary. At the same time, Anani (15-0, 7 KOs) admits she is scared, which to her is a good thing.

"My fear really motivates me," says Anani, the 1999 fighter of the year according to the Women's Boxing Archive Network. "Some people are loose, but I'm the opposite. Until I get in there, I'm scared."

Her opponents are even more scared. Anani, 28, and her trainer, Barry Becker, have been hard-pressed just to find opponents. In the co-main event today, paired with Angel Manfredy's homecom-

BOXING

The Angel's Homecoming

■ **What:** Professional boxing card.

■ **When:** 3 p.m. today. Doors open at 2:30.

■ **Where:** Majestic Star Casino/Trump Hotel Casino, Gary. (Ring outdoors in a covered tent).

■ **Tickets:** \$25 for general admission; \$50 for preferred seating.

ing, the challenger is Denise Moraetes, whom Anani beat a year ago.

"Some girls just won't fight me, but there's also a lot of politics in women's boxing, just like men's, and it frustrates me," Anani said.

Anani's career has been short but impressive. She was born in Albert Lea, Minn., but lived in Jamaica for a year, which led to her nickname. Before her first fight in Kansas City, where she now resides, her only other competition was an 18-month experiment in Olympic weightlifting in her teen years.

Then Becker came to her with a message.

"(Becker) came down with the magazine with Christy Martin on the cover and said, 'This can be you. I know you can do this,'" Anani said.

By her fourth fight, Anani was inflicting heavy damage. In that bout, she registered a TKO over novice Katie Dallam. After the fight, Dallam fell into a coma for



TRACY ALBANO / THE TIMES

IFBA Continental junior welterweight champion Sumya Anani returns to the ring today at the Majestic Star Casino/Trump Hotel Casino to face Denise Moraetes. Anani is 15-0 with seven knockouts, including a win over Christy Martin.

one day and had surgery to repair a cerebral hemorrhage.

Then on Dec. 18, 1998, in her 11th pro fight, the heavy-handed Anani won by decision over Martin.

"Everybody remembers me for that, but I don't dwell on it," Anani said. "I'm not out there every day like, 'Oh I beat Christy Martin!' To me, every one of my opponents is the next Christy Martin."

A rematch with Martin is still a long way off. Becker said Martin and promoter Don King have shied away from talk of a rematch. Martin (39-2, 27 KO) is in negotiations with Kathy Collins (12-1, 3 KO), who holds three belts.

"That's just money-motivated," Anani said. "If (Collins) wanted to fight the best, she'd fight me because I already beat Christy Martin."