



Boxer Al Amin weaving dreams

SPORTS REPORTER

Boxers Sura Krishna Chakma and Mohammed Al Amin made dream starts in their first-ever professional boxing tournament in Bangladesh as the two managed to beat their respective Nepalese opponents on May 19.

"I turned to Pro Boxing for financial security, as well as for more international exposure," said Al Amin, who beat Nepalese boxer Bharat Chand in the welterweight category to mark a memorable point on his journey.

"It's a new beginning for me and I believe Pro Boxing will pave the way for country's boxers to compete in Asian and World titles. And here, any individual gets a huge opportunity to secure their



financial life," said the 31-year-old boxer, who is looking forward to continuing as a boxer for another 10 to 12 years.

Al Amin trained under many foreign coaches and took part in different national and international tournaments since he took up the boxing gloves as a Grade IV student in 1997.

"I fell in love with boxing when I was a primary school student. You know, in my hometown [Rajshahi], boys and girls are playing different kinds of sports and suddenly I went to see a boxing competition and immediately I decided that I would go with it.

"Initially my family members had discouraged me but coach Shafiqul Azam Masud encouraged me a lot and I've also been getting support from another coach Kazi Shahadat Hossain," said Al Amin, a bronze-medallist in 64-kg category in 2019 South Asian Games in Nepal.

Al Amin, who idolises Ukrainian boxer Vasyl Anatoliyovych Lomachenko and USA boxer Floyd Joy Mayweather Jr, has been fighting in amateur boxing competitions for quite some time now. He believes the opportunity in amateur boxing is very limited in terms of financial stability and international exposures.

Al Amin is now, more or less, financially stable as he fights for Bangladesh Ansar in different competitions and yet, he has kept his bigger dreams in Pro Boxing well in sight.

It's not a sport, IT'S A BUSINESS

Boxing, a sport that showcases thunderous fights that see opponents land haymakers and rouse spectators as they battle for supremacy in the ring, has recently entered a new era in Bangladesh. While famous international boxers like Joe Louis, Muhammad Ali, Mike Tyson, Floyd Mayweather, Canelo Alvarez, Tyson Fury, Manny Pacquiao and many others have excited fans across the world and made headlines due to the enormous prize purses on offer, Bangladesh has recently started hosting professional boxing competitions on home soil.

ANISUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh are more familiar with amateur boxing, which they have competed in during different games like Olympics, Asian Games, South Asian Games and Commonwealth Games. Amateur boxing is fought in different weight categories across three rounds of three minutes each, with a one-minute break between the rounds. Professional boxing, which made the likes of Muhammad Ali household names, has at least four rounds of three minutes each, and can have as many as 12 rounds depending on the experience of the boxers involved.

Other than that, professional boxing does not feature protective headgear, which is compulsory for amateur bouts. Boxers also require a licence to participate in professional bouts, but amateur boxers compete in different competitions under direct supervision of government-affiliated national boxing federations.

Under the supervision of the newly-formed Bangladesh Boxing Foundation (BBF), the recently-concluded professional boxing competition titled 'Xcel presents South Asian Pro Boxing Fight Night - The Ultimate Glory' made waves in Bangladesh, with proud Bangladeshis sharing pictures on social networks of boxer Sura Krishna Chakma draped in the red and green flag.

Professional boxing's journey in Bangladesh started in November, 2020 under the Bangladesh Professional Boxing Society (BPBS), which organised 14 professional boxing competitions that did not garner much media attention.

Before the BPBS started their journey,

Sura Krishna Chakma trail-blazed Bangladesh's start to professional boxing. The former BKSP student was the first Bangladeshi boxer to compete in a professional boxing competition beyond borders, fighting against Indian



professional boxers in Haryana in 2018. The Dhaka University graduate won both bouts in India before winning his third bout against a Nepalese boxer in Bangladesh on May 19.

"We have just started professional boxing's journey in Bangladesh. It is now our responsibility to create a roadmap and environment so that we can create long-lasting developments in professional boxing. We are planning to hold a national competition in each quarter of the year and two international competitions yearly," said BBF chairman Adnan Haroon, who was once the vice-president of BPBS.

BPBS was founded in 2020 by internationally recognised trainer, mentor and promoter MD Asaduzzaman, who is also the chairman of World Boxing Buddies Union, China.

"I have been involved in the professional boxing arena for nearly 30 years and worked in 67 countries," said Asaduzzaman. "I dream of giving Bangladesh boxing a professional shape. I took approval from world bodies -- ABC and Boxrec -- and returned to Bangladesh in 2020 to start working through BPBS. I want to take Bangladesh

professional boxing to a certain level within 2024," Asaduzzaman said, adding that they had organized 14 professional boxing competitions in the last 18 months and that other boxers were set to feature in two international competitions in India and Colombia in June.

"Professional boxing is not a sport, it is a business. If everything is done properly, a boxer can earn Tk 60,000 to crores per fight. However, we have to work hard to get to that level," opined Asaduzzaman, who claimed that he had trained 17 world champions. As champion, Sura Krishna Chakma was awarded Tk 20,000 while debutants received Tk 5,000 each. Given the lack of a proper structure, it could not be discerned how many boxers, amateur or otherwise, there are in Bangladesh.

'It's difficult, but I made it this far and want to go further'

In pursuit of his passion from a very young age, boxer Sura Krishna Chakma made headlines around Bangladesh as he was crowned champion in the lightweight division of the recently-concluded 'Xcel presents South Asian Pro Boxing Fight Night - The Ultimate Glory', the first international professional boxing tournament held in the country earlier this week. The boxer from Rangamati's Juraichhari defeated the Nepali champion, who had previously fought two bouts, winning both. He shared his journey of becoming a professional boxer with The Daily Star's Ashfaq Ul Mushfiq. The excerpts are below:

The Daily Star (DS): What were the things you learned initially after first starting as a boxer in BKSP?

Sura Krishna Chakma (SKC): It starts with the basics. We were taught the fundamentals. Offensively, you have moves like jabs, cross punches, uppercuts and hooks. Alongside that, we had to learn to defend, how to slip and roll. Gradually, as we move to the next level, we prepare for matches. But the main focus is always the basics.

DS: You continued boxing alongside your studies. How did you form that habit?

SKC: As a student of BKSP, I formed this habit from a very young age. We had to wake up early in the morning and all the athletes would have breakfast together. Then we went to morning training sessions.

Afterwards, we went to classes and then practiced again in the afternoon or evening. We sometimes had classes at night. So before you know it, days and weeks just pass by. At my university, my teachers helped me a lot when I was away for the national-team camps so that I could sit for exams and finish my degrees.

DS: How was your experience at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow? What were the differences in levels and facilities there?

SKC: Of course, there were noticeable differences in the levels and facilities. In my first time, I faced an opponent from New Zealand who had experience of over 20 international bouts. Despite the result not going my way, I had a very close contest with him. Back then we had a coach from Ukraine and he was very good. He trained me very well and enabled me to have a good fight.

DS: What is Sura Krishna Chakma's daily routine?

SKC: When I am in a national camp, my routine starts with waking up around 6:00am. After breakfast, I go to the gym and train. After lunch, we have training sessions in the afternoon. Even on my days off, when I'm not in the camp, I wake up very early. This is a habit I formed from a young age. I try to keep myself active and fit. I play football with my friends at university. I don't stay up late either.



Sura Krishna Chakma

DS: Do you have any pre-match rituals?
SKC: Yes, I listen to music because it helps me focus and get pumped up before fights. I always listen to songs from the boxing movies like Rocky, Southpaw, and Creed. The song "Eye of the Tiger" from Survivors was my anthem. There is a song by a Chakma band that I listen to before every match. When I went to Nepal to take part

in a professional fight against an Indian boxer, I listened to our national anthem.

DS: People who follow their passions instead of opting for regular jobs usually encounter a lot of naysayers. When you decided to chase your passion for boxing, which is not a prominent sport in Bangladesh, did you encounter such people?

SKC: My family members have always inspired me since I was young, but there were always some people who would say otherwise. Even in BKSP, there were a few people who would tell me there is no point to boxing because there was not a future in it nor financial security. But I always had confidence in myself and believed in my dreams. I kept working hard and followed my passion. It's true that, in terms of result, I've started to get some success. But in terms of finances, I'm still struggling a lot. It's difficult to maintain fitness and continue training in return for the amount I have earned. If it was a different sport like cricket or football, the same amount of success would have brought me a lot more money.

DS: Who is your favourite boxer? Do you follow anyone's style?

SKC: I don't have a favourite specifically. Growing up, I've always heard about Muhammad Ali, who was not only a great boxer but also a great human being off the ring. He is considered one of the greatest sportspersons of all time. I follow all the great boxers like Mike Tyson, Floyd Mayweather and many more and try to capture the best from them according to what fits my style.

DS: Where do you see yourself in the future?

SKC: The dream has always been to be in the world championship. I want to work hard and go as far as possible. It's difficult, but I have made it this far and I want to go further.