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A MAGAZINE WITH AN ACCENT

Preview

The People's Champ

Vic Darchinyan is the littlest grown man you've ever seen, but he's arguably one of the biggest names buzzing around in homes when it comes to boxing. His blazing trail to worldwide superstardom is highlighted by one knockout victory after another. At 35, the "Raging Bull" is still striding with full steam ahead. But don't take our word for it, he'll be more than happy to tell you.



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Longly heralded as the "Lord of the Flies," Vic Darchinyan's eccentric and outspoken personality makes him the "Lord of the Mic." Spending a better part of five days with the fighter, my notebook began to resemble a gold mine with his random acts of quotaciousness. When he speaks, he gives material that is one punch better than the other. Anytime his promoter Gary Shaw introduces him, he jokingly allows only 30 seconds for his charismatic fighter to speak.

Every other word that comes out of Darchinyan's mouth as he sells a fight begins with "knockout" and ends with "I'm going to destroy him." That is the only thing he promises. Of his 36 wins, the KO guru has delivered on his word 27 times. The diminutive yet confident southpaw is always looking to prove how good he is, how strong he is and, as all fans have become accustomed to by now, how great he is. His all-action fights are usually Showtime's highest rated.

To call Darchinyan's aggressive fighting style unorthodox is a vast understatement. He sometimes waves his arms in semi-circles above his head before throwing one of his

patent left haymakers. Every now and then, he opens his stance, drops his arms to his sides, and dares his opponent to land a punch. Masked under all the unconventional and wildly entertaining tactics of lulling opponents into walking into one of his trademark knockout shots is a smart, gritty and technical fighter. It's all part of the mind games he loves to play, where a thunderous Darchinyan throb can be felt through the seat cushion of your couch. During the first rounds of any fight, he's always looking to find weaknesses, like a shark swimming around helpless prey. He never watches film on his opponents, so as soon as he has one baited in, he pressures and bullies them with hellacious shots to the point of no return. Fittingly, for a man who pulverizes anything in its way, he's been bestowed the nickname "Raging Bull," also shared by the great Jake Lamotta, the boxer of which had an Oscar-winning film about him in 1980 starring Robert DeNiro.

"If I ever was in a barroom brawl, and I had to choose any fighter, I would ask Vic Darchinyan to be in front of me," says promoter Gary Shaw of his 5-foot 5-inch fighter. "He is the single most loyal fighter I have ever dealt with – or know – in my entire

EDITOR'S NOTE: This week, Asbarez kicks off its unique collaboration with Yerevan Magazine, which, since 2008, has already been providing audiences in the US with entertainment, thoughtful commentary, insightful features, and tasteful advertising that is pleasing to the eye. One of the elements of our collaboration is to provide our readers with a preview of upcoming edition. We begin this preview with Yerevan Magazine's September-October issue, which is at newsstands and Armenian stores throughout the Los Angeles area. For more information visit yerevanmagazine.com

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Editor's Note

From the September-October 2011 Issue

Fashion is a relative phenomenon. Many visitors to Yerevan could not help but notice the exquisitely well dressed men and women on the streets. Women in Yerevan put on their nicest outfits and full make-up before leaving the house, even to go to the grocers nearby. However, on many occasions, those same women wear those same outfits for a late dinner or a party.

In the U.S., on the other hand, people often dress too casually for their daily activities. Here is the land of flip flops for brunch, jeans for business casual, and Keds for movies. Nevertheless, in the U.S. people spare no expense on their evening gowns, tuxedos and wedding dresses. This often reaches another extreme, when the same dress or tuxedo is not worn twice, especially if the owner was photographed in it. This idea of spending tens of thousands of dollars on an evening outfit and never wearing it again may seem ridiculous not only in Armenia, but also in many other parts of the world.

Thus, fashion always reflects society – its insecurities, vanities, conformities or revolts. Often it is a vehicle for an endless popularity contest with many losers and few winners. The stories of fashion icons (Chanel and Dior), victims (Marie Antoinette), trendsetters (St. Lorain), and rule-breakers (Lady Gaga and Alexander McQueen) continue to fascinate generations to come.

What is fashion if not a mere concept that gets lost in translation. It is the belief and understated daily task that has many thriving while others struggling trying to get the look. It is fashion that has started many revolutions such as the abandonment of the corset, the adoption of pantaloons, and idea of being simply fabulous. Many find fashion intimidating while others live for the latest conception that will transfigure ones lifestyle. It gives voice to the unheard, a place for the fearless, and way to control and sustain a rhythm. Fashion is not always about what is in style but also what one can and cannot wear. It is a field that has no borders, limits or end in sight.

It is this belief and ideology that is embodied in fashion that ignites the curiosity of the *Yerevan* team. Whatever this notion is – art or intent, style or trend, our world would be a boring place without it. Thus, we join the legion of media saluting the ever-changing world of fashion. Viva la mode!

life. For me, I can't give him a bigger compliment than talking about his loyalty."

With the good comes the bad, and Darchinyan is mainly criticized for being inconsistent with his defense and predictable by always looking for the one-punch knockout recipe. Falling under the lines of unpredictable is Vic wanting to jump into the cage of mixed martial arts. He has expressed the sentiment time and time again when frustrated on the progression of fights he's long yearned for.

"I love it when I am the underdog, and when people say I can't. That just fuels me even more to prove my critics wrong," he counters. His one-dimensional style is similar to that of a former worldclass champion he idolized and who doubled his weight in any given fight over 20 years ago, Mike Tyson. The crowd-pleasing Darchinyan is credited for single-handedly bringing the little guys back to television, just as Tyson made every fight a spectacle. Darchinyan has appeared on cable TV's Showtime Network 13 times. He is third on the all-time list for appearances behind Julio Cesar Chavez and Evander



Holyfield. "We're in love with Vic Darchinyan. He's one of the most prolific fighters that have appeared during the 25 years of fights on our network. He's a huge draw and has an exciting style. He's part of our family," says Ken Hershman, the Vice President and General Manager of Showtime Sports.

Darchinyan also treats his fans like family, as he is one of the most accessible superstars in the sport. His entourage is mostly made up of boisterous baby boomers and families decorated in Raging Bull and Armenian paraphernalia. There is never a picture or autograph request he declines. In the middle of a meal, after an interview, during training, after a fight – whenever – a Sharpie is always seemingly bound to his fingers at all times. Bound to his ring finger is a diamond ring with so many carats, Bugs Bunny would turn the other way. Dangling from his neck is a thick gold chain with a boxing glove hanging by his heart, where he's had the sport close to it ever since he was an eight year-old training in Vanadzor with Vazgen Badalyan. Earlier this year, on April 23 in Los Angeles, Darchinyan beat Yonhhy Perez for the IBO

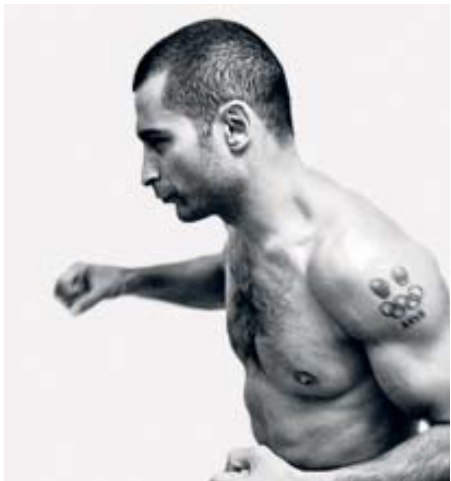
bantamweight title. With it, he also won a century-long battle outside of the ring when he used the night and his national platform on the televised bout to commemorate the Armenian Genocide. He and his entire team walked into the ring wearing shirts in remembrance and the beltline of his trunks had "1915" written across them. He further delivered the message in a post-fight interview in the ring, and later at his press conference. The next day, he joined the thousands of Armenians advocating Genocide recognition on the streets of Los Angeles. "April 24 is a very important day for all Armenians around the world. Hopefully, I made it a little better and put a smile on their faces," he said afterwards. "I fight for my son. My family. My parents. And my country – Armenia."

It is for these reasons, Vic Darchinyan is both a champion in his profession and for his countrymen.

Although Darchinyan lives and fights out of his current residence of Australia, he always comes into the ring bearing the Armenian flag, and usually, under the instruments and vocals of a fellow compatriot. While participating in the World Amateur Championships, Darchinyan was approached by American managers and promoters to become a professional boxer. He did not accept the invitation in order to fulfill his lifelong dream of representing Armenia in the 2000 Olympics, where he reached the quarterfinals and later inked the rings and roman numerals "XXVII" below his left shoulder.



THE RAGING BULL: Vakhtang "Vic" Darchinyan was born in Vanadzor, Armenia on January 7, 1976. In the 2000 Sydney Olympics, Darchinyan was an Olympian quarter-finalist representing Armenia at 112 pounds. After a strong amateur record of 152-18 (105 KOs), Darchinyan turned professional in November 2000 in Australia. In 2004, at a record of 21-0, he won the IBF Flyweight World Title against a previously unbeaten Irene Pacheco with an 11th round TKO. It was his first world title victory and fight in the United States. Darchinyan says it was the most momentous victory of his career to date. In August 2008, he won the IBF Super Flyweight title with a fifth round KO over Dimitri Kirilov. Three months later, he TKO'd Cristian Mijares for the WBC and WBA world titles. In 2009, he dominated former WBO and WBA light flyweight champion Jorge Arce with an 11th round TKO. On April 23 this year, he beat Yonhy Perez for the IBO bantamweight title. His career record currently stands at 36-3-1 (27 KOs). He is 13-2 (10 KOs) in world championship fights.



the blemishes. He says that if he doesn't get a title shot at 118 pounds, he'll move up to 122 or down to 115. In his 10-year pro career, he has fought as low as 111 pounds (flyweight) and as high as 118 (bantamweight). Being a former 115 pound kingpin and two-division world champion, the hard hitting Darchinyan has participated in 15 world title fights, and that's all he wants.

"I'd fight anyone in the division today. I'd like to fight Abner Mares. If not, I'll fight Nonito Donaire. If they won't fight me, I'll move up to another division. I'll go fight MMA. I don't care," he says. "I want to challenge for the title. I want a rematch against Mares or Donaire. For Donaire to say he doesn't need to give me a rematch, after I gave him a shot at my title, just shows how much he is afraid of me and doesn't want to fight me."

Darchinyan admits that he underestimated Donaire in his first defeat in 2007, calling it the biggest mistake of his career when he was on the receiving end of a knockout. Mares, who beat Darchinyan with a close and controversial split-decision in 2010, only offered praise for the man 11 years his senior.

"Vic Darchinyan is a great fighter and a tremendous puncher. I thank God that I was able to take his punches in my fight against him. He hits really hard and you feel his power. He's a really determined fighter who never gives up and always throws big blows. He is a great veteran, a great champion and I respect him a lot," Mares tells Yerevan.

At 35, Darchinyan is still young in the sport considering the wear and tear on his body, which is minimal at most. He is still a training and physical specimen who hits the gym every day. He runs through torrid Australian heat and effortlessly completes two thousand pushups a day – with his legs mounted on the top of the ring ropes, making it even more grueling.

Oscar De La Hoya, who retired at 35 after losing four of his last seven fights, tells Yerevan Magazine, "If it was up to us, we'll continue boxing until we are 60 years old. Boxing is in us, it's a part of us. Vic Darchinyan is a very smart and tough fighter. He still has it in him, and will so for many years."

Says Darchinyan: "I'm not coming just to win the fight; I'm coming to bring excitement. I want to fight the bigger and better guys. I want to fight world champions. I want to prove my point and show everyone how strong I am at the moment. I have my style, I am who I am. I'm just going to show everything in the ring. You're going to see my punches and you're going to hear my punches from now on." With only a handful of marquee fights left to his name, Darchinyan still talks the talk and walks the walk.

"No more showcasing skills and trying to box from now on. Only raging and destroying," he closes.

To the dismay of his opponents and exhilaration of his fans, the Raging Bull can only be tamed for so long.

During the Sydney Olympics, an Australian-based trainer, Jeff Fenech, observed his progress in the preliminary bouts and offered him to turn pro. Darchinyan accepted and obtained sponsorship from Henry Hacobian, a well-respected Armenian businessman living in Sydney. Having entered Australia on a temporary visa for the Olympics, he returned to Armenia with the expectation of returning to Australia to pursue his professional career. After turning pro in 2000 and fighting in the country until 2004, he became an Australian citizen on July 7, 2004. Today, he is a superstar, a restaurateur, and a household name in the country, where he lives with his son and wife.

Now, Darchinyan has come full circle as he returns to the birthplace of his colorful and championship decorated amateur boxing background with his homecoming fight against Evans Mbamba in Yerevan, set to take place September 3 at the Karen Demirchyan Complex in Armenia. Mbamba will try to pry away Darchinyan's International Boxing Organization (IBO) 118-pound title.

Darchinyan fans always travel well, so he'll have his legion of friends and family from Armenia – his parents Ruben and Rena live there – Russia, where his wife is from and his adoptive countries of Australia and America – at the fight.

"I appreciate that people say I'm responsible for getting so many Armenians to go to fights in Southern California and other places. But these people are just good boxing fans that like my style and know that I always give my best and put on exciting fights. If they didn't like my style, or I made bad fights, they wouldn't show up," he says.

His promoter, one of boxing's best, adds: "He needs love, and the Armenians give him that love wherever we go. It's a beautiful thing," says Shaw, whose been treated to endless Armenian food and drink every time he's chaperoned Darchinyan to Armenia and abroad. "When I went to Armenia he was extremely protective of me. We have a great relationship together man to man, and not fighter and promoter."

With three career losses to his name, Darchinyan is constantly looking to avenge