

Team Kovalev upset with Square Ring for 'protecting Sillakh'



Sergey Kovalev

BIG BEAR, Calif. -- Team Kovalev blames Square Ring for a verbally agreed upon North American Boxing Federation "(NABF)" title fight between unbeaten light heavyweights, challenger **Sergey Kovalev** and defending champion **Ismayl Sillakh**, to fall apart due to a contractual dispute. Sillakh-Kovalev, according to Kovalev's manager **Egis Klimas**, had been approved as the main event for a proposed April 27th *ESPN Friday Night Fights* show in Atlantic City.

"It would have been special having two Russian-born fighters headlining an ESPN card," Klimas said. "I understand that it was quickly approved because everybody in boxing knows it would have been a very good fight. We agreed to everything, including short money, to step-up and fight Sillakh on national television. I have a lot of respect for Ismayl as a fighter but his people are doing him a disservice. Everything was good on both sides but, right before Square Ring sent me a contract, I learned from the matchmaker about there being options on my fighter if he won. I would have agreed to a rematch if Sergey won a decision, but I wouldn't be doing my job if I gave them four options written in the contract. They couldn't lose either way if I signed that contract."

Kovalev (17-0-1, 15 KOs), born in Chelyabinsk but now living in Big Bear, California, was a highly-decorated Russian amateur boxer (193-22). Trained by **Abel Sanchez**, Sergey is the reigning WBC Asian Boxing Council 175-pound champion, rated No. 12 by the World Boxing Council ("WBC").

Ukrainian-born Sillakh (17-0, 14 KOs) lives in Simi Valley, California. The 27-year-old is highly rated - #2 World Boxing Council, #6 International Boxing Federation ("IBF"), #10 World Boxing Association ("WBA") and #10 *The Ring Magazine* - and considered a rising star in boxing. Unable to get any of the world champions or top contenders in the ring, Sillakh has been portrayed by

Square Ring as being the most feared fighter in his division, which Klimas' asserts is nothing more than promotional propaganda.

"This is just another example of a promoter protecting its fighter, which is exactly what's wrong with boxing today," an irate Klimas added. "Sillakh's NABF title defense is overdue and they sent out an email to a lot of top light heavyweights looking for a fight. We accepted the challenge but then they put four options in the contract. They can't have it both ways. If Sillakh is the best light heavyweight in the world, somebody that no other top light heavyweight will fight, as they claim, why do they need four options on my fighter? I can see putting a rematch clause in the contract. I asked **John Wirt** (President of Square Ring) why he put four options in the contract and he said to protect his fighter and company. I guess they aren't really sure Sillakh can beat Kovalev."

Kovalev is a promotional free-agent who, based on recent conversations conducted by Klimas, has offers on the table from a few major promoters to sign an exclusive contract.

Go online to www.kovalboxer.ru for more information about Sergey Kovalev.