



RAGING BULL

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If he were to retire tomorrow, **VIC DARCHINYAN** would go down as one of Australia's finest boxers of all time. But his career is only just taking off

SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF VIC DARCHINYAN, PART ONE

Vic Darchinyan, Armenian-Australian, 33, slight 166cm figure, crew cut, lean face, sits opposite me in the sunny garden of a quiet café in a plain western suburb of Sydney, consumes a sweet-looking coffee-and-ice-cream thing and talks about destroying people.

Darchinyan is a boxer at a time when boxing is not very well. Chances are, these days, you'd prefer to watch guys with Brazilian martial arts black belts who fight in cages; the ground and pound instead of the straight left to the jaw. Boxing is trying hard to get your attention back and Darchinyan is one of those who could do it.

But he is an odd choice of saviour. The fact that Australians barely know who he is, is well established. Despite the Raging Bull nickname,

world titles and fabulous knockout record, Darchinyan gets fewer autograph requests here than Sydney FC's second-choice goalkeeper.

But he's tough and he's brave and he'll fight anyone if they challenge him. Really. Anyone. And that's the key. Part of boxing's decline can be traced directly to the lack of big fights, or fights that were sold as big fights but turned out to be duds. Champions who weren't champions, belts that meant nothing, matches you didn't care about between boxers you'd never thought of, let alone barracked for.

Now the ship's come in. Why pay \$25-plus for a heavyweight fight when you can keep your wallet in your pocket? Pay per view receipts are down, live crowds are down. When was the last time you talked seriously about a heavyweight contest? They're begging Lennox Lewis (43) to come back and fight a big Ukrainian statue.

The result of this is weird things are happening,

and they're happening at the lower weights. The super fight is back on. Who cares if the guy you want to knock out is three divisions above you? It's on, brother. The public want action and everyone needs the money. Hence Ricky Hatton grows to fight Floyd Mayweather Jr, tiny Manny Pacquiao faces Oscar de La Hoya at welterweight and beats his brains in, Danny Green starves himself to tackle Anthony Mundine – celebrity death matches, only they're real, they're happening. And right in the middle of this brave new world is Vic Darchinyan.

To understand how he fits in, you need to know Darchinyan's journey. Sports people like to talk about "journeys" in their retirement press conferences, when all they've done is won a tournament or two, come back from a broken leg, married the local girl and had Brad Jr. But Vic Darchinyan's bulletproof confidence shows a man who's spent years living, fighting and winning in some of the darker corners of the world. ❖

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