

# Q&A: Michael Katsidis!

Current WBO#1 ranked lightweight Michael Katsidis (25-2, 21 KO's) is one of Australia's marquee fighters and has enhanced his reputation in recent years by his involvement in some exciting contests with his come-forward, aggressive boxing style that ensures boxing fans are always entertained.



He comes off an impressive win in April this year against former WBC super-featherweight and IBF lightweight champion Jesus Chavez as part of Golden Boy Promotions "Lightweight Lightning" tournament in Austin, Texas when he wore down the former Mexican champion and forced him to quit on his stool before the start of the eighth round. This win secured Katsidis the WBO#1 mandatory position at 135 pounds and has opened up the door for some meaningful matches in 2009.

The 28 year old Katsidis is generally in an exciting bout, where he is no stranger to dropping opponents to the canvas and also being dropped himself. This was seen in the superb "war" with Joel Casamayor in March last year, one of the best fights of 2008. His come-forward style coupled with the volume of punches he throws makes for an exciting spectacle and against the veteran Cuban he got up off the floor in rounds one and ten and dropped Casamayor in the sixth before finally being stopped in the tenth round, when he was ahead on two of the three judges scorecards.

Since the win over Jesus Chavez, the former WBO interim champion at lightweight has challenged both Ricky Hatton and Manny Pacquiao to fights in their own country which highlights the desire of the 28 year old to take on the best fighters on the world boxing stage. He holds no fears of testing his skills on an international basis with his last six fights being fought outside his native Australia.

The fighter from Queensland is known as "Katsidis The Great" and this is derived from his Greek heritage and this week he is travelling to the ancient city of Larissa, at the foot of the mythical Mount Olympus, said by historians to be the homeland of the ancient Greek Gods and the birthplace of Achilles, the Greek hero of the Trojan War. This is where his father is from and the local Greek community have arranged a special party for the town with Katsidis the guest of honour in the coming week.

On his way back from a vacation in Japan, Katsidis caught up with Fightnews.com and gave an update on his plans for the rest of 2009.

When you defeated Jesus Chavez in your last fight, many people felt this was one of your best performances given his reputation as a Mexican warrior - was he a tough opponent?

Chavez came to the fight with an ex-

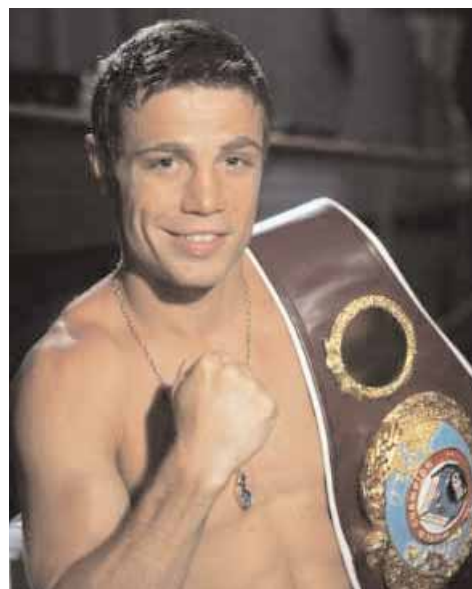
cellent reputation and he had been a former two weight world champion. We had prepared extremely well for the fight and to be honest I gave myself no option to lose. By the time the fight was stopped I was coming into my best rounds. Jesus Chavez told me after the fight that he was in great shape for the fight but by round five he had no answers to my onslaught and saw it in his best interests that he could not continue. To hear these words from such a legendary fighter such as Chavez was a huge boost in confidence for me.

Your fight with Joel Casamayor in 2008 was considered one of the most exciting in recent years - would you like a re-match?

I know that I am a better fighter than Joel. I learnt a valuable lesson in that fight and I would jump at the opportunity to repay the favour. I think many boxing fans would like to see that fight again as it was an exciting match of ups and downs and if we did fight again, I know there would be a different result.

Tell our readers about your Greek heritage and your upcoming trip to Greece?

My father is from Larissa, the home of greek legend Achilles. His village is at the base of Mt Olympus and historians believe it to be the homeland of the ancient Greek Gods. I have been invited as a special guest at the annual town party and given I am half Australian, half Greek this is part of my own personal history and my own personal heritage. This is the first time I have had the opportunity to travel to Greece and I believe the experience will give me added strength, motivation and deter-



mination.

You have stated recently that you are prepared to go to Manchester, England and fight Ricky Hatton in a homecoming bout, should he continue fighting. Is that offer still live?

Definitely. Ricky and his team know this and we are prepared to fight Ricky, wherever and whenever he wants. I hold Ricky in such high regard since the day he beat Australian boxing hero Kostya Tszyu and I hope that he has it in him to give his huge army of fans another great fight. I am hearing rumours he may take an easier opponent for his return fight which disturbs me - a fight between us both would be a great clash of styles and a true boxing spectacle that fans would watch, not only in England, but all around the world.

You also recently went to the Philippines and offered to fight pound for pound king Manny Pacquiao - do you think this could happen?

With the injury to Floyd Mayweather and the postponement of the Marquez-Mayweather bout, there is a delay in a super fight between the winner and Manny and I am quite happy to step in and fight him. He can give a fight to his people, who are so patriotic to their boxing hero and I am not afraid to go into the backyard of the best fighter, pound for pound in world boxing. We nearly made a match a few fights ago but it didn't happen and hopefully it could well happen yet. To both Ricky Hatton and Manny Pacquiao I am ready, willing and able to come to your countries and give an excellent boxing spectacle to your fans.

Michael, you are considered one of the most exciting fighters in world boxing - where did your boxing style come from?

I think that the way anyone fights is something that they are born with. I don't treat it like some boxers as a science, sport or a game. I just fight from the opening bell and I believe my style developed within itself and not influenced by other fighter in the gym. My best work has been done with myself and long-time trainer and manager, Brendon Smith.

If Amir Khan defeats Andreas Kotelnik in Manchester next month, would you be prepared to move upto 140 pounds and take him on in the UK?

I think Amir Khan is only stepping up in weight because he can't deliver what

his mouth continues to preach to the rest of the world about how great he is. What he is talking about just know, is the least of my concerns.

Your last six fights have been outside Australia - will you fight again in your native Queensland?

In boxing I don't want to deny myself the opportunity to take the boxing world by storm and that is why I continue to travel to fight in the boxing world. I have fought in the UK, USA and the Philippines in my last six fights and when I have done what I can in the sport I can return home to fight. I cannot see any of the world ranked fighters at 135 and 140 pounds coming to my backyard in Australia so I will continue to fight wherever the fights can be made. If they won't come to me, I will go to them - I do not want to die wondering.

The current lightweight division is currently one of the most exciting and crowded in world boxing - who do you see as the best fighter at 135 pounds?

To be honest I don't really do my own form guide and I look at the fighter in front of me and until I face them I have to reserve my opinion so I give nothing away. The fighter I do give credit to however is Juan Manuel Marquez. He is an extremely patient and dangerous fighter and the only person to knock out Joel Casamayor so he has my respect. I know how good Casamayor is after our fight in 2008 so that win was very impressive. Now I am WBO#1 ranked mandatory for his title that would be a great fight.

Edwin Valero from Venezuela seems to have amazing power - would you enter the ring with such a dangerous champion?

There isn't anyone in the current lightweight division I would not fight, including Valero. What you have to remember is that I too knocked out all of my opponents when I fought at the level he is fighting at. I am not sure he would fight an opponent like me just yet. I am not sure whether a step up in class to fight me is worth the risk for him.

What boxing objectives do you have for the rest of 2009?

This is the year I really want to get on top of my game. I let too much slide in 2008 and suffered two losses. Since then I am back and back with two good wins and I have done all my groundwork in a thorough and professional manner with my trainer and manager, Brendon Smith. Now I am back my goal is to measure myself up against one of the best in world boxing. Whether this is Ricky Hatton, Manny Pacquiao, Joel Casamayor, Juan Manuel Marquez or Edwin Valero anywhere in the world doesn't bother me. My reputation has always been to provide boxing entertainment to the fans and a match with any of these fighters would be such a great boxing event. To these fighters - make the call. I am ready to fight.

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With Katsidis now ranked WBO#1 at lightweight he should be in a strong position to deliver a meaningful fight against some of the boxing elite in the crowded and exciting 135 pound division.