

## Showman Varma shares his views and boxing dreams



Siddharth Varma of the Venky's Mumbai Fighters

After his exuberant display of self-assuredness in his last fight against Dynamo Moscow, Venky's Mumbai Fighters' Lightweight boxer Siddharth Varma became the talk of WSB. Here we get to know more of the boxer behind the showman as he shares with us his views and boxing dreams.

**We hear that boxing is your life and true passion. You are inspiration to other young boxers. Why are you so passionate about this sport?**

Yes, boxing is everything to me. I want to inspire a generation from Maharashtra (the state where he hails from) to take up this sport. After seeing me fight in Russia, so many of my juniors have called me and started asking for tips and encouraged me to keep it up. They all look up to me now and it feels great.

I would say nothing is impossible. From childhood, I always looked around for real strong and athletic role models, fighters mainly. Since I joined WSB, it has been a real eye-opener, allowing me to hone my skills in the Pro format I enjoy so much. To continue pursuing my passion, I have quit everything else in life to focus only on this sport. I don't think I could function without boxing in my life.

**You made quite an impression in your first fight against Dynamo Moscow. You certainly entered the ring with lots of exuberance. Is it because it was your first WSB match or is it your style?**

It has always been my style. Even in amateur bouts, I used to get foul points for showing off (Laughs). But on a serious note, I believe in self-motivating and peppering myself up all the time. The moment I entered the arena in Russia, it was a dream come true, my life until then had been building up to that moment. All I cared about was winning. There are moments in your life that define who you are and whether you take the challenge positively or otherwise. For me there is no option but to be positive.

**You surprised your Dynamo Moscow counterpart Eduard Husainov with several flurries of punches. Are you pleased with your performance?**

I am happy, but when I saw the video, I realised that I have to be a bit more cautious. My coach also told me that I fought well but will have to focus more on my fights now and learn more combination punches.

**Were you nervous before the bout?**

I was told that Russian boxers were good and more professional than most but I soon realised they were humans after all, not super humans. I fought well and made sure Husainov didn't get an inch but overall I am disappointed that I lost.

**How did it feel when WSB boxing came to your hometown of Pune?**

I was so excited and my first thought was that this more of a movie than reality. Diwakar Prasad won his bout, boxers made their entries with our national flag, the crowd was cheering and it was all so unreal to me. In fact, a day before my match in Russia, I could not sleep because of the excitement. I had heard so much about Russians, that they were strong and extremely tough but when the match came about, all nerves were gone and replaced with a great anticipation.

**How did you feel after your first WSB match?**

It felt great to have boxed but I was disappointed to lose, but having been able to study myself in the aftermath of the defeat, I am now already focused on my next bout.

**What was your reaction when you were first asked to box for the Venky's Mumbai Fighters?**

The first thing I did was call up my younger brother Anand. He has always been my source of inspiration. Despite being younger than me, on his very small daily wages he bought me shoes, bandages and all the equipment I needed so it is thanks to him that I am where I am today. I know nothing else other than boxing and he has supported me throughout my career. He would squeeze his expenses to make sure I got all the support I needed. I owe my life to him.

**What do you feel you have improved on boxing-wise whilst being with the Venky's Mumbai Fighters?**

I have increased my power and quickness of punches, my overall stamina and core strength. But what matters is that I am high on confidence. I never had that. But here, I have become a different boxer.

**We hear Evander Holyfield is your favourite sportsman. If Evander happens to be in Mumbai or at one of the fights where you are fighting...**

I will not leave his side. I would be grateful if he could spend half an hour sharing his tips. But I won't forget I am a boxer and not only a fan and make the most of it.

**Which team-mate impresses you the most?**

Diwakar Prasad has impressed me the most. He has a good head on his shoulders. He is in my weight category and still shares tips to see me an improved boxer. Even while sparring against me, he would keep telling me to do something or other. At the end of it, he is an Olympian and an Olympian guiding me is like a dream.

**What is your favourite part of training? Your favourite exercise?**

I enjoy stomach hits which strengthen my core muscles. Hitting the bag I enjoy as it improves my combination.

**What are your boxing objectives for this season?**

Nothing less than winning. Also I don't want to stop this training at the end of the season. I don't want to stop anywhere. The journey has only begun. I have been a fighter all my life, now I am actually going to be recognised as a boxer. I am proud now to be known as a Venky's Mumbai Fighter.