

Rocky Fielding: setbacks make you stronger, you have to think about what really matters

► British boxer gears up for comeback in Dubai, with a new opponent in Emmanuel Danso



British boxer Rocky Fielding was face Emmanuel Danso on his comeback in Dubai.

Rocky Fielding

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British boxer Rocky Fielding is returning to the ring after a two-year absence, and is part of a star-studded card slated for Dubai on November 26.

The D4G promotion is scheduled to take place at MotoSpace and will be broadcast live in the US on ESPN+ in association with Top Rank, and worldwide on IFL TV. The highly-anticipated card also features former two-weight world champion Badou Jack and Pakistan talent Muhammad Waseem.

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Former British super middleweight champion Fielding faces Emmanuel Danso on his comeback. As part of the buildup, Fielding will provide a weekly update about his training regime in Dubai. This week, he talks about mental preparation.

How do you prepare yourself mentally ahead of a big fight?

For me, it's about having good people around you. You have your coach, team-mates and family. As long as they are there for you while you're training for a fight, that's the main part. You need people who are able to help in whatever department you need it, whether that's in or out of the ring.

Your opponent has changed in the last few days. You're now fighting Emmanuel Danso, from Ghana – how do you adapt to that at such short notice?

I've been in boxing long enough to know these things can happen. When you're at the level I'm fighting at now, after a period of inactivity, you would probably have four opponents on standby because you know there's a chance one might pull out.

My training hasn't changed, I'm still getting some quality sparring in. I've been sparring all different types of styles, people like Badou Jack, a former two-time world champion, and Mounir Lazzez, who is a UFC fighter out here, and a very good boxer. I'm experienced enough to know opponents change and I don't think it will have a significant impact on anything. It's happened to me before so it's nothing new.



How much of your preparation is mental, as opposed to physical?

My weight was high after Covid and lockdown, and even though I was training, it felt like I was at a bit of a dead end. So I took a bit of time off, lived normally, didn't look at my diet as much and put a bit of beef on compared to how I usually am.

Earlier in the year I looked in the mirror and felt I'd let myself go, and I was in a bit of a rut. I took myself away, I've trained hard for months now and the weight's coming down. Even though I haven't had a fight for a long time, I don't feel as though I've been out at all. We'll see where I'm at on November 26th.

It was a big mental challenge at the start but I have good people around me – my girlfriend and kids – and I have my motivation back. I've been putting the work in, running around Dubai in the heat and I'm on a good path.

What are the biggest challenges you've faced in your career from a mental perspective?

Mentally, boxing is full of ups and downs. But outside of the ring, and the gym, life is the mental part in terms of coming in and making sure your family are all good.

I've had various challenges over the years with my grandad passing away and my mum being diagnosed with cancer shortly after my defeat to Callum Smith. That was real-life stuff so losing fights and having a few setbacks only makes you stronger. You have to think about what really matters, which is your family, the people around you and where you want to go in life.

I usually bounce back well after a setback. I lost to Callum but I came back and won the British title. I won a world title and then lost to Canelo, but in my first fight back I ended up winning in two rounds.

Previously, I was at a point where boxing was on my mind 24-7, but I've had a bit of time away and now I feel rejuvenated.

How does it feel mentally when you actually win a fight? How long does the elation last?

It depends on the type of fight you're in. If it's a title fight, like when I won the WBA super middleweight title in Germany, I only had five weeks' notice and if I'd lost that, I knew I wasn't going to get any more big shots, so it was a huge relief. It felt like the weight of the world had been lifted off my shoulders. But then you wake up the next day and you go back to being a dad. Having that winning feeling is always good but then very quickly you're thinking about getting back in the gym and preparing for the next fight.

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