**I want the big one**

World titles are there for the taking

Joseph Akhasamba may have retained the

Africa heavyweight title but he was not impressed by the manner in which he won his recent fight against Nigeria's Emmanuel Chukwu at the Nyayo National Stadium's basketball gymnasium. The scheduled 12- round bout, promoted by Nairobi-based Nigerian Uche Onyebadi, ended via a fifth round stoppage in favour of Akhasamba whom JOHN NENE interviewed this week.

Excerpts. '

Q. Having retained the Africa heavyweight title, what are your immediate plans?

A. I want to defend my title again before the end of the year, and then aim for something bigger.

Q. Are you eyeing a world title, and what do you think are your chances because fathertime is catching up with you.

*A.* If I get a shot, I'll contest for a world title. As you know now we have a number of world boxing bodies, so these days it's not difficult to get a shot at a world title like it was before. I still feel I'm strong enough. At 36 years, Jim capable of winning a world title.

Q. What are your views on the scrappy Africa heavyweight title fight in which you successfully defended your crown against Nigeria's Emmanuel Chukwu?

A. The fight was difficult because throughout my boxing career I've never fought such an awkward opponent. Although the referee stopped the bout in the fifth round after Chukwu complained that his right eye could not see, I was not happy with the victory because it was then that I was gathering steam, ready to show him that I was fully prepared to slaughter him.

Q. So your'e saying that Chukwu was not

a good boxer.

A. He was not. He had no plan for the fight because he was boxing like a bullfighter, and he can easily hurt somebody with his wild punches. I've no respect for him.

Q.A number of accusations have been leveled at the Kenya Professional Boxing Commission (KPBC) on its style of administration.

A. In my opinion, they're doing a good job, but the major problem is lack of promoters. Some people are blaming the commission for nothing. They should know that the KPBC is not a promotion company. Their job is to guide and assist where there's need. What we boxers lack are managers who can arrange fights for us so that we concentrate on training instead of a boxer doing everything for himself. For now the standard of professional boxing is still low.

Q. What of the medical aspect. Would you say that all boxers who enter the ring are mentally and physically fit for their fights.

A. I strongly feel some of them are not, and soon the commission might land in big trouble if they are not careful. I suggest that the commission introduces thorough medical check-ups. What is being done now is not enough. These days we have a lot of diseases. We're also aware of AIDS which kills. The commission must make it mandatory for all boxers fighting in local and international bouts to have headscan and HIV certificate. It's risky, for instance, when fighting an opponent with AIDS and he gets a cut. He will infect his opponent with the virus. The KPBC chairman (Reuben Ndolo) and his team should make it a must for every boxer to have the HIV and headscan certificate, if not, a boxer should not be allowed into the ring.

Q. When did you start engaging yourself in boxing and who taught you the fundamentals of the sport?

A. I started boxing in 1983 at the Pumwani Boxing Club under coach Alex Omwomwo, who is a former international. One of my heroes then was former world middleweight champion Marvin Hagler of the US. I also took up the sport for self-defense. During those days, street fights were the order of the day. In this case one had to learn how to defend himself. For instance in Ziwani Estate, most of my friends were either karatekas or boxers. After featuring in inter-club and other local tournaments,l was selected to box for Kenya for the first time in 1986 against Russia, and lost on points. The same year I won a gold medal in the East and Central Africa championships. I retained the Iightheavyweight title the following year. My most successful year was in the 1990 Commonwealth Games in Auckland, Now Zealand, where I won a gold at heavyweight.

Q. When and why did you decide to turn professional?

A.I started boxing as a pro three years ago. I turned pro because of the new rule by the world international body (AlBA) which states that once a boxer attains the ago of 32, he quits amateur boxing. On attaining that age I still felt I was strong enough to continue boxing, that's why I switched to proboxing. I intend to fight for at least two years and then retire.

Kenya's .Joseph Akhasamba (left) goes for a jab against Nigeria's Emmanuel Chukwu last week.

Akhasamba won the bout and was declared Africa's heavyweight champion