



Ready to bang: Sonny Bill Williams will put his boxing career on the line after going through his paces with trainer Mick Akkaway at Peakhurst last week.

Picture: Chris Lane

# Sonny Bill at crossroads

His mate, Anthony Mundine, might have gone down in the fight last week but Sonny Bill Williams now takes centre stage on Friday night, as **Michael Carayannis** reports.

SONNY Bill Williams will walk away from boxing should he lose to Francois Botha on Friday night but a win could see the dual international switch to the sport full-time.

Williams made no secret of his desire to focus solely on boxing should he defeat the

experienced Botha in their 12-round bout for the WBA International heavyweight title in Brisbane. Williams has fought for six rounds, twice.

But he indicated he would retire from the ring if he tastes his first loss.

He declared he wants to be taken seriously in the boxing scene but didn't expect that to happen if he could not overcome Botha.

"I can definitely see myself taking on boxing as a career," said the gifted athlete after he was put through a gruelling 45 minute fitness and skill session by renowned trainer Mick Akkaway in a Peakhurst gym — his last hit out in Sydney before flying to Brisbane.

"This fight is defining for me. It'll be either onwards and upwards or that's it. I'm not going to die wondering. If I lose it'll be a bit of a waste of time.

"It's about doing what makes me happy. At the start, there was no way I could see myself doing this full-time and in boxing circles, I was a bit of a joke."

Williams's skipping routine was interrupted when the rope hit the low ceiling of the gym, and Akkaway had to remind him to steer clear of the in-ring ropes for fear of his pupil crashing out of the ring. When Akkaway wanted to end the in-ring session, Williams egged him on, pushing two more rounds out.

"It's another level compared to football," said Williams, who has battled a fever in the lead-up to the fight.

"Every training session is pretty much fitness and when you have to turn up to the gym every day knowing you're going to get punished, it can be a bit draining sometimes. On top, you're trying to learn a whole new craft. But you live and die by your own sword and you have to put in the hard yards."

Williams's preparation for Botha is a far cry from his opening four fights, where he trained solo.

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