

TITLE FIGHTER

Welterweight boxer Ashley Theophane has won a host of national and international titles during his 10 year professional career to date. And, as the current GBC champion tells **ANDY GREEVES**, he sees no reason why his beloved Tottenham Hotspur can't put up a title fight of their own in the near future.

ASHLEY Theophane shares in the feeling of optimism that currently abounds at White Hart Lane.

Having beaten some of the biggest clubs in England and Europe this season, we are widely viewed as one of the Barclays Premier League's elite forces and the boxer – a lifelong Spurs supporter – relishes in that status.

"Finishing in the top four is still something we will have to push for and we can't assume that it's a foregone conclusion until it happens, despite the fact we've already got some massive results this season," he says.

"I'd love nothing more to see Spurs playing in the UEFA Champions League. The last campaign in the competition (2010-11) was fantastic. We performed brilliantly and proved that we belong in that company, especially having beaten clubs of the size and stature of Inter Milan and AC Milan."

Like many of us, Theophane had little choice as a youngster as to what team he would grow up supporting.

"My father introduced me to Tottenham Hotspur in 1988, when I was old enough to start enjoying football," smiles Ashley. "Dad (who is originally from St Lucia) has been a Spurs fan ever since he came to England in the 1960s, so it was the natural thing for me to start supporting them."

The Paddington-born fighter spends a fair amount of time outside Great Britain in any one year.

During 2012, he spent two months at a training camp in America at Gleason's Gym in New York City and Floyd Mayweather's Gym in Las Vegas (where he has also been in March 2013) in the first half of the year.

"It was amazing to watch Floyd Mayweather in his preparation for his bout with Miguel Cotto," says Theophane. "I was even offered a slot on the show in Las Vegas."

He returned to the States in August, beating two-time world title challenger Delvin Rodriguez in North Carolina and would also assist Ricky Burns in his preparation for his world title fight with Kevin Mitchell, which he won by a knock out.

The highlight of the year though was recapturing the GBC (Global Boxing Council) welterweight title – having originally won it back in 2006 – beating Chaurembo Palasa in the title fight held in Luxembourg. At the end of 2012, his professional record stood at 33 wins, one draw and five losses.

"My career target is 50 wins and I want to add as many titles and championships as possible," he says.

Despite having something of a jet-set lifestyle, Theophane still attends matches at White Hart Lane when he can, sitting in the West Stand.

"You can't beat the atmosphere at home games," he says. "I love joining in with the songs and watching what is a fantastic Spurs team right now."

"I've got so many great memories of this club. The first

and most vivid would probably be the FA Cup semi-final win over Arsenal in 1991 en-route to winning the trophy. I was so happy when Paul Gascoigne scored that fabulous free kick and we went on to win 3-1. That memory will always be with me."

Theophane ranks Gazza among the best Spurs players he has ever seen and is now including Gareth Bale in that category too based on his performances of the last couple of seasons.

"Paul Gascoigne, Gary Lineker and David Ginola would have to be my best players of all-time," he confirms. "I loved how the likes of Gascoigne and Ginola could just make a goal out of nothing while Lineker was simply one of the greatest strikers of his era."

"Gareth Bale has to now be mentioned in the same breath as those guys. He has maintained a level of performance over the last couple of seasons that is right up there with the best players around the world."

"I also have to give an honourable mention to Ledley King, who I was sorry to see retire. He was top quality for us and to offer us such loyalty too assures that he will always be a legend of this club."

Theophane says he sees no reason why next season we can't challenge the likes of Manchester United, Manchester City and Chelsea for the Barclays Premier League title.

As our players hopefully look to do just that in 2013-14, the boxer will be looking to add more honours of his own which, throughout his career, have included British Light Welterweight and the GBC Welterweight titles.

You can email ashley@ashleytheophane.com to obtain a free signed photograph of Ashley Theophane. For more information and to read Ashley's blog visit www.ashleytheophane.com.



THEOPHANE RANKS GAZZA AMONG THE BEST SPURS PLAYERS HE HAS EVER SEEN AND IS NOW INCLUDING GARETH BALE IN THAT CATEGORY TOO BASED ON HIS PERFORMANCES OF THE LAST COUPLE OF SEASONS.