

What Super Heavyweights

Written by Frank Lotierzo
Thursday, 10 April 2003 18:00

Over the past couple years, boxing fans have heard many commentators talk about the size of today's heavyweights. The announcers make a big deal over how big some of them are, implying that size is equated to a fighters ability. Some have suggested the idea of implementing a Super-Heavyweight division. There are those that point to the supposedly imposing size of Lennox Lewis and the Klitschko brothers as to why this should be considered.

Why? If you're a heavyweight, 6'1" and 220 pounds and you can fight, that's plenty big enough to not only be a major factor, but to become the heavyweight champ. Sonny Liston of the late 50's and 60's is viewed as the fighter who transitioned the era of the big-heavyweights. Liston at 6'1.5" and 218 pounds was the first heavyweight champ over six feet tall and weighing over two hundred pounds since Joe Louis of the 30' & 40's (6'2" 198-207). Since Liston, how many heavyweights bigger then him have achieved greatness? How about four, Muhammad Ali, George Foreman, Larry Holmes, and Lennox Lewis. Since the end of the Holmes era in 1985, other then Lewis, the two best heavyweights are Evander Holyfield, who was a cruiserweight and weighed between 205-210 in his best days as a heavyweight, and Mike Tyson who was 5'10" and was 216-221 in his prime.

I believe the era of the giant heavyweight is totally overblown. Until recently it was perceived that the lighter a heavyweight weighed in, the better shape he was in. Today it's the opposite. Most look at bigger heavier fighters as being stronger and better punchers, this is a myth. Look at some of these big guys today, most of them carry too much weight, which hinders their speed and stamina, and adds nothing to their punching power. Other then Heavyweight champ Lennox Lewis, what other big heavyweight has been even moderately successful sustaining a championship reign ? Not Riddick Bowe, he made two title defenses and lost to Evander Holyfield who only weighed 215. In spite of beating the smaller Holyfield two out a three, it seems that the bigger Bowe had more taken out of him, and was an empty package by the time he fought Golota. Lennox Lewis cemented his legacy beating and old cruiser weight in Holyfield, and a past his prime 5'10" Mike Tyson, not exactly the biggest heavyweights in the world.

Even in todays heavyweight division, 210-225 is plenty big enough if you can fight. Most of the fighters over 235 are just big and cumbersome. Most of the big heavyweights tire easily, you seldom ever see them fight a full round. Their size adds nothing to their punching power, nor does it help them take a big shot on the chin. Just in the last month we've seen two great examples as to why this is true. On March 1st of this year we saw Lt. heavyweight champ Roy Jones weigh in at 199 pounds, and totally dominate WBA heavyweight champ John Ruiz who had a 27 pound weight advantage. Why, because Jones is a great fighter and Ruiz was just a bigger fighter. Off of Jones' victory over Ruiz, some belive he can beat any heavyweight except Lennox Lewis. Using that logic then one has to wonder what a prime Ali or Holmes would've done to the Klitschko's or Lewis. Certainly no one in their right mind could possibly belive that Roy Jones brings nearly the same to the ring at 199, as Ali or Holmes at 220. On March 8th we saw 224 pound Corrie Sanders stop the 6'6" 245 pound WBO champ Wladimir Klitschko in two rounds. Why, because Sanders has fast hands and at 224 can punch plenty hard enough to do

What Super Heavyweights

Written by Frank Lotierzo
Thursday, 10 April 2003 18:00

damage. The towering Klitschko's size didn't do him any good when he got hit on his chin.

Other than Lennox Lewis, who are the big heavyweights of today that show any promise of greatness ? Jameel McCline is a huge guy with good basics but, he can't punch and has shown that he's nothing special inside. Michael Grant, he's put together physically but, he has a suspect chin and hasn't shown the upside potential that some thought he could have achieved. How about the Klitschko's, Vitali is big and can punch, however he is slow and ponderous, and has already lost to former super-middleweight Chris Byrd. Wladimir has shown good boxing skills and decent speed but, against McCline he was tentative when McCline threw punches back, and after the Sanders defeat his chin has to be considered suspect. Lance Whittaker is a big strong guy who can hit but, he's slow and hasn't shown that he has the boxing skill needed to be a complete fighter. Henry Akinwande is another giant but, he flat-out can't fight at the world class level. I just don't see why some commentators and writers are making such a fuss over the bigger heavyweights of today.

The bottom line is 210-225 pounds is plenty big enough for a heavyweight of today as long as he has some ability to box. Chris Byrd the IBF Champ started as a super-middleweight and usually weighs around 214. He has fast hands and can box and knows exactly what he's doing in the ring. It will take a fighter with more than just size to take his title. Roy Jones campaigned mostly as a middleweight and Lt. heavyweight through out his career, and now he's the WBA heavyweight champ. Just like Byrd, it will take more than size alone to make him an ex-champ. Corrie Sanders was 224, yet he stopped the 245 pound Wladimir Klitschko in two rounds, and Wladimir was projected to be the best of the big heavyweights. Lastly we can't forget Evander Holyfield, who was thought by most to be too small throughout his entire heavyweight career. Yet from 1990 through 1999 he was the best and most consistent heavyweight in the game. It appears Chris Byrd has put the first nail in his career coffin, and most likely Roy Jones will add the final nail to it. How about that, neither the enormous Bowe or Lewis will be remembered for retiring the "Real Deal" but, Byrd and Jones will be the ones to end his dream of becoming a five-time heavyweight champ. Two guys who started their careers at even lower weights than he did.

In the heavyweight division bigger is not better. You can actually be too big in the heavyweight division today, especially if you can't fight. Being able to fight is what makes the difference, and a fighter who weighs in the range of 210-225 is plenty big enough to knockout a fighter who weighs 245-260 who's not as skilled.