

Heavyweight Fact Sheets: Battle for Supremacy

Written by Chris Gielty
Saturday, 16 October 2004 18:00

MEDIA RELEASE

"Battle for Supremacy" is being presented by Don King Productions and will be shown on HBO Pay-Per-View, beginning at 9 p.m. ET/6 p.m. PT on Saturday, Nov. 13.

JOHN "The Quiet Man" RUIZ

Two-Time, and Current WBA Champion
Methuen, Mass.
39-4-1 (28 KOs)

Trainer and Manager: Norman "Stoney" Stone, who has been with Ruiz since he was an amateur.

Cornermen: Bobby Covino, Alex Riveria, Bryan Stone and Eddie Ruiz (brother)

Training Schedule: 8 a.m. run, 2 p.m. weights. 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.: training, evening sparring and gym workout.

"There are lots of great heavyweights on this show," Ruiz said. "This is the perfect chance to see for ourselves, and for the public to see, who really has the talent and is the best."

On Preparation (according to trainer Norman "Stoney" Stone): "Johnny is already in great shape and acting like a caged lion. He won't even go out for his meals. We're training for Golota with different sparring partners. Even the guys that specialize in illegal tactics. We will be ready and Johnny will show everyone he's The Man at the top of the heavyweight heap. I have already hired two psychiatrists to try to explain to me why Golota does the things he does in the ring."

"Bear" of a Tale: During his daily early-morning run in the Poconos on Oct. 6, Ruiz was joined by fellow Bostonian boxer Angel Vargas when they spotted a bear 25 feet up the trail. "Thank God that bear wasn't hungry because we just turned and ran the other way," Ruiz said.

Apparently, the wildlife population in the Poconos is strong, because Ruiz and other camp members have been dodging deer as well as bears while jogging on a four-mile loop they describe as "hills, hills and hills."

What do Ruiz and Golota Have in Common Besides a Brawling Style? Neither Ruiz nor Golota are boxing "fans." Both do not follow the sport, rarely watching other fighters or fights unless they are called upon to do so for promotional purposes. For these two "lunchpail" brawlers, boxing is where they "punch the clock" to make a living.

vs.

ANDREW GOLOTA

Polish Strongman and No.5 Contender

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Warsaw, Poland, now fighting out of Chicago
38-4-1 (31 KOs)

Trainer: Sam Colonna, who has also trained Angel Manfredy, Angel Hernandez, Vaughn Bean and many other Chicago-based fighters.

Big Pole Has Lucky Charm: Colonna trained Golota for his first 22 fights and for his last three fights. Golota has never lost a fight when Colonna has been his trainer.

“Andrew and I have a certain understanding,” Colonna said. “A fighter and a trainer have to know what is expected of each other. In our case, we have that because you have to understand Andrew Golota. He’s different than any other fighter I have ever trained. I think I get more out of him than anyone else. When I see him going the wrong way, I’m the one guy that can get him to snap out of it.

“In this fight with Ruiz, he will be tested. Ruiz is difficult and he’s physical. Byrd is one thing, Ruiz is another. Ruiz might spin you, hit behind your head, hit you on your hips or hold you. You know he’s going to try to get Andrew to snap. My job is to make sure that doesn’t happen.”

"I am proud to be part of the show and I want to be part of something that unifies a real champion," Golota said. Regarding Ruiz: "Nothing personal, Johnny, I love you. You too, Stoney. But you're in my way and it's going to go my way November 13th."

CHRIS BYRD

IBF Heavyweight Champion

Flint, Mich., now fighting out of Las Vegas.

36-2-1 (20 KOs)

Trainer : Joe and Rose Byrd, (mother and father) Patrick Byrd (brother)

Camp Coordinator : Tracy Byrd (wife)

Byrd rises at 5:30 a.m. daily to run (current Las Vegas morning temperature: 60°); weight training at 9 a.m. (gym in basement of home); 1 p.m. sparring and boxing sessions (gym in carriage house behind home). Byrd’s sparring partners stay in four-bedroom guesthouse attached to backyard gym (it’s not Extended Stay, they call it, “Extend-A-Camp”).

Not Hatfields and McCoys: The Byrd and McCline families are very close. McCline considers Byrd his idol, and after the couples met in 2001 (after McCline’s fight with Michael Grant), they have remained close and have even stayed at each other’s home, sharing babysitting duties. Byrd’s wife, Tracy, and McCline’s wife, Tina, have become even closer friends than the boxers. Tracy says they “call each other just because!”

Chris sent McCline’s baby daughter Samantha a toy car (Volkswagen Beetle) for her first birthday, and Tina McCline said, “I never thought Chris would buy her first car.” For now, the families are not speaking to each other and avoiding all contact. “I hate it but it has to be this way,” Tracy Byrd said.

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"Jameel is my friend and we tried to avoid fighting each other," Byrd said. "But now that we are fighting I have to treat him like any other opponent—I want to hurt and beat him. There won't be any hesitation on my part to knock-him out. Actually I would love that! I fought my brother Patrick in the amateurs, and although I love him, we fought like dogs. It doesn't make a difference to me. I fight my heart out and may the best man win."

vs.

JAMEEL "Big Time" McCLINE

Leading Available Contender

Port Jefferson, N.Y.

31-3-3 (19 KOs)

Trainer: Jimmy Glenn, who trained Floyd Patterson, Joey Gamache, John Mekins and "Irish" Bobby Cassidy (father of Newsday's Bobby Cassidy) and owner of New York City's legendary boxing watering hole Jimmy's Corner. When questioned about the fighters he has trained, Glenn said, "If you come to my bar, I'll tell you about all of the other champions that I have trained."

"This is a huge card," McCline said. "When I was a kid, I used to run the streets of New York City. Now I am fighting at the Garden. It's a dream come true. Chris is my friend and I respect him as that and as the champion he is. I'm looking forward to the fight and will be victorious."

"A couple years ago I was asked who my boxing idols were and I named two," McCline said. "Riddick Bowe, because for a big man he was one of the first guys to show athleticism, and Chris Byrd because he's a little guy who will fight anybody, anywhere, anytime. He's shows a lot of heart and wonderful skill and he's just someone I look up to. When I got to know him as a person he was even better than what I thought of him before."

"So here I am fighting a great person, a great fighter and a great man at Madison Square Garden and it's 10 years to the date since I got released from prison—so it's all destiny. It's a beautiful thing to be involved in right now."

HASIM "The Rock" RAHMAN

Former WBC/WBA Champion

Baltimore, Md.

39-5-1 (32 KOs)

New Trainer: Thell Torrence, who was mentored by Eddie Futch and has trained Riddick "Big Daddy" Bowe, Audley "A-Force" Harrison, Ken Norton and others.

'Old School' Attitude: Known for his impatience with fighters who lack commitment after being schooled by the legendary Eddie Futch, Torrence likes what he sees in Rahman after working with the former heavyweight champion for just three weeks. "I agreed to work with him because he was willing to work within my program. From the very beginning he has been honest with me telling me where he's been, where he is now and where he wants to go."

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"Rahman's personality sometimes takes me back to my early days with Riddick Bowe because he is a good-natured, funny fellow. He's also been giving me a great effort every day.

"I thought Meehan won his fight with Brewster," Rahman said. "I told Don to get me the guy who really beat Brewster. He's a nice guy and showed his friendship with Brewster. He rocked Lamon to sleep like a baby. He won't do that to me. I will be ready to fight this fight and every other fight I have until I am once again champion of the world."

vs.

KALI "Checkmate" MEEHAN

WBO/IBF Asia Pacific Champion

Wyongah, Australia

29-2 (23 KOs)

Trainer: "Magic" Mark Janssen. Meehan's recent successes on the world stage can be attributed in large measure to his trainer since 2003, "Magic" Mark Janssen, who retired as an undefeated Australian middleweight ranked in the world top five, before becoming a trainer. Janssen's steady hand has guided Meehan to new heights.

Boxer Training with Aussie Rugby Squad? Meehan has taken up training at the Parramatta Rugby League Team Training Facility in Sydney where he is currently in two-a-day workouts: He runs sprint sessions from 6 a.m. to 7 a.m., lifts weights from 7 a.m. to 8 a.m. and conducts training and sparring sessions from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. when the Rugby players aren't using the facility. The Parramatta players have been fascinated by Meehan's training sessions and have become fans of the heavyweight, and Meehan is a fan of the team as well. Meehan's near-defeat of WBO heavyweight champion "Relentless" Lamon Brewster on Sept. 4 has made him a sensation down under. He calls himself "Australasian" to recognize his birthplace of New Zealand and his home of Australia.

"To be here fighting on this show is so great," Meehan said. "When I was a little boy, I wanted to fight. Then as my career progressed, I wanted to fight in America. Now to be fighting at Madison Square Garden, and also fighting with the best heavyweights of my era, is something I would never imagine could happen."

EVANDER "The Real Deal" HOLYFIELD

Four-Time World Heavyweight Champion

Atlanta, Ga.

38-7-2 (25 KOs)

Trainer: Ronnie Shields, who trains Juan Diaz, Ivan Hernandez, Juan Lazcano and Dominick Guinn and has trained "Iron" Mike Tyson, Vernon "The Viper" Forrest, Jessie James Leija, Andrew Golota, Pernell "Sweet Pea" Whitaker, Arturo Gatti and others.

Holyfield took a break from training after his loss to James "Lights Out" Toney and will not have been in a fight for over a year when he enters the ring on Nov. 13 and will be 42 years old.

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Don King said about Holyfield, "He's an old man just rolling like a river."

"This is the first step I have to take, looking over my past fights," Holyfield said. "I have made some adjustments and realized I have to be totally dedicated and ready to fight."

"I couldn't get another fight. I wanted a championship but that didn't happen. I couldn't let a whole year go by (October 2003 was his last fight) so I had to take this fight."

"The big thing was to get a championship fight but unfortunately it didn't happen that way. So instead of letting a whole year go by without no competition at all, I think that would have hindered me. So more than anything I had to go back to how I usually think. I can't be so concerned about getting a championship opportunity. I have to be more concerned about winning it when I get it. So I have to prepare myself so whenever the time will come I'll get it and win it."

"It's not like I had a big problem with Chris Byrd. It's that at that time my health wasn't the best that it could have been."

"I think that anytime I go into the ring, people know that I'm not going in there boasting that I'm better than anybody. They know that I'm going in there for a goal. The thing is not to fight just to fight. I have a goal to become heavyweight champion of the world. It's not because I need money; it's not because I have a bad attitude and I can't do nothing about it. It's just the fact that I have to finish the right way. The finish is to be heavyweight champion of the world."

"The big thing is, I'm in this game because I believe I can win it, not because of the condition that the fighters are in or because of the competition. I always felt that I was the better fighter than the fighters that were fighting."

I have a passion for the game. I go to sleep and wake up still wanting to fight. I've never been a person who cares what anyone else says. If that was the case, I'd still be in the ghetto. You're only old when they throw dirt on you."

"Being undisputed champion is something that's been there since 1992 when I lost to Riddick Bowe. There have been times to step away, but my goal has always been to be undisputed champion. The importance is to be the best. If I only get one title, it's only one-third. There are still two other people with titles who think they're the best. The reality is you have to have all three belts. Then no one can say they're better than you."

vs.

LARRY "The Legend" DONALD

Former NABO Heavyweight Champion

Cincinnati, Ohio

41-3-2 (24 KOs)

New trainer: Colin Morgan, who was born in Georgetown, Guyana, and now lives in New York

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City and also trains WBC cruiserweight champion Wayne "Big Truck" Braithwaite. Morgan has also trained Andrew "Six Heads" Lewis early in his career, Andrew Murray, Gary St. Claire, Tiger Martinez, Bert Cooper and others. He is considered by many to be one of the more under-rated trainers in boxing.

"Larry is willing to learn and he is a very hard worker," Morgan said. "He has relied too much on his natural abilities, which are huge.

"I'm teaching Larry that if he wants to go to the next step, he must develop his natural killer instincts and punch properly by sitting better on his punches to get more snap, which will result in knockouts. You'll see the difference when he steps into the ring with Evander."

"Working with Colin has been great," Donald said, "Believe me, my whole body has been feeling it, too.

"It's always good to fight a Hall of Famer," Donald said of Holyfield. "A lot of people may think he don't have it anymore but he do. When he comes to fight, he comes to fight. Anybody who goes in with him and expects him to lay down has a problem.

"I'm not disappointed in my career. All around I've had a beautiful career. A couple of fights I may have fallen short but you can't fall apart. That's when you have to be at your best. I feel I should have gotten more opportunities, but everybody isn't willing to step in the ring with me the way Holyfield is. He never ducks and dodges nobody. Why would he start now?

"Holyfield has a goal, and I have a goal, and we both can't reach 'em. His is to become five-time heavyweight champion. I'm just striving to be champion. That's what's going to make our fight magnificent. This is a title eliminator.

"It's very rare to get all those top-notch fighters on one card. This is going to be beautiful. I'm excited to be part of it. For me, what this fight's all about is opportunity. Nothing will stop me and I am ready to rumble."

Tickets priced at \$800, \$500, \$300, \$150 and \$75, are on sale now at the Garden box office and all TicketMaster locations or by calling TicketMaster at 212-307-7171, 201-507-8900, 631-888-9000, or 914-454-3388. TicketMaster purchases are subject to convenience charges.