

Breaking Down a Night of Heavyweight Boxing

Written by Joey Knish

Friday, 12 November 2004 18:00

You have to give Don King and his organization credit. They have put together quite a show for tonight. The general public is fascinated with watching the heavyweights letting the leather fly—as the bigger they are, the harder they hit, and the further they have to fall. Knowing this, the HBO PPV broadcast on Saturday features six fights from the heavyweight division, including two title tilts.

The most recent bout added to the Madison Square Garden card pits DaVarryl "Touch of Sleep" Williamson against "The Atomic Bull" Oliver McCall. None of the half dozen bouts stand out as exceptional fights on paper, but they'll fight anyway and we may be pleasantly surprised.

Regardless, the quality of the night at least is assured through its quantity.

Headlining title fights have WBA champion John Ruiz defending against Andrew Golota, while the IBF belt is up for grabs as Chris Byrd puts his title on the line facing Jameel McCline. Supporting bouts include Hasim Rahman versus Kali Meehan, Evander Holyfield dancing with Larry Donald, Monte Barrett looking to continue his good form against undefeated Owen Beck and the newest addition, Williamson-McCall.

Each one of these bouts offers a certain amount of intrigue to boxing fans.

Many are wondering if Andrew Golota's solid performance against Chris Byrd was a case of Byrd slowing down with age or Golota finally putting the physical and mental aspects of boxing together at the same time. Ruiz is a rough and tumble fighter, the kind of guy who can get under the skin of even the most level-headed boxers. Ruiz will test the Foul Pole's mental mettle, and the answer to how Golota reacts is the answer to the fight.

For Chris Byrd, many were wondering what happened to the slick, stylish southpaw in the Golota bout. Byrd sat down on his punches more and subsequently was hit more when he fought Golota to a draw back in April of this year. Byrd claims he will be back to shakin' and bakin' versus the mammoth McCline. The 6'6" giant will be looking to connect with his solid jab and slow down the elusive Byrd in order to zero in for his heavy power shots. McCline tipped the scales at 270-pounds on Thursday and whether he has enough gas in the tank to chase Byrd for twelve heats is the key here.

Hasim Rahman wants back into the championship circle of friends and he comes into the fight Saturday weighing a svelte 232-pounds. This will mark the fifth fight of the year for the Baltimore native as he started the year weighing 255-pounds, then 257, down to 248, 246 in his last fight – and now a lean mean 232. His opponent, Kali Meehan was most famous for being knocked out in one round by Danny Williams and for being Lamon Brewster's sparring partner. After unsuccessfully challenging Brewster for real, Meehan gets a shot at a top ten heavyweight in an eliminator for the IBF #2 ranking. Both men have power and both have been knocked down. Whoever takes the other's shots best will tell the tale between these two bangers.

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Old-timer Evander Holyfield lives to fight another day in an attempt to reverse a two-fight losing skid after being out-boxed by Byrd and then stopped by James Toney. Byrd was just too fast and too slick for Holyfield, while many feel Toney just might be one of the best heavyweights today. If "The Real Deal" can't get by Larry Donald, then he simply isn't The Real Deal anymore. Donald will be looking to work behind his jab and be more active than Holyfield, which isn't something Donald does often. Still, he has only lost to Riddick Bowe, Kirk Johnson and Vitali Klitschko so it won't be easy for Evander.

Undefeated Owen "What the Heck" Beck is 24-0 with 18 knockouts, but his toughest opponent to date has been 32-7 Brazilian heavyweight George Arias. "Brazilian heavyweight" says just about all you need to know about Arias. Monte Barrett is a strong heavyweight who can switch from orthodox to southpaw and really test his opposition. He came up just shy of knocking out Joe Mesi as the clock beat him before he could beat Mesi. Barrett then challenged undefeated Dominick Guinn and took his 'O' . . . Beck's may be the next to go.

Finally, 33-year-old DaVarryl Williamson versus Oliver McCall has been added to this solid evening of pugilistic entertainment. Williamson got a late start in boxing and at 20-3 with 17 KOs is in a must win situation, and so is his opponent. While Williamson got the short end of a Technical Decision against Wladimir Klitschko in his last bout, he can bang with the best and has a chance to use his jab and power to keep McCall at bay here. McCall, 39, has lost seven times, but has never been stopped. Officially he lost to Lennox Lewis in their rematch by TKO 5, but he had a mental break down, refused to fight back and cried in the ring . . . thankfully that was enough to stop it. McCall also has good power, with 31 KO's in his 41 wins, and all three of Williamson's losses have been by knockout. This one looks like either a Williamson decision or McCall KO, you decide.

Don King and HBO have each done their part in bringing and intriguing and exciting night of boxing to the fans. Now it is up to the fighters to deliver.