

If Sven Ottke Fell In the Boxing Forest, Would He Make a Sound?

Written by Joey Knish
Monday, 29 March 2004 21:00

If Sven Ottke fell in the forest, the age-old debate as to whether or not he makes a sound will now be left forever to debate. The undefeated Ottke retired from boxing immediately after his win over Armand Krajnc this past weekend.

The dictionary defines "sound" as "a tone or noise that is heard." Therefore, if no one state-side has ever seen Sven Ottke, he couldn't possibly make a sound if he fell in the forest. Someone has to be present to hear the noise, at least as far as the folks who write the dictionary are concerned. Over an eight-year span, no one outside of Germany even knew what a Sven Ottke was.

This past Saturday Sven Ottke ended his perfect boxing career at 34-0 with a whopping 6 "did I really see what I think I saw" knockouts. At 37 years of age he retires the Super Middleweight champion, having spent his entire career fighting on his home turf in Germany. Okay, he did make one trip all the way over to Austria in his seventh professional bout, but he surely must have thought he was still in Germany to take the fight. His managers must have pulled one over on him for Ottke not to realize that he wasn't in Kansas, umm, err, Germany, anymore. Home cooking tasted so good to Ottke he never wanted to leave, and he didn't.

A few decisions on his resume are tainted with some local flavor and that just gave him more motive to keep doing what he was doing. The recipe of local fights, local promoters and local judging had worked for his team. They say that if you keep doing what you are doing you are going keep getting what you have been getting. According to those who might hear a noise if Ottke ever did fall - they saw him after all - close wins over Robin Reid, Mads Larsen, Byron Mitchell and Charles Brewer were more likely close losses. Still, Ottke kept doing what he was doing and kept getting was he had been getting. Wins.

As the book closes on the career of Sven "the Phantom" Ottke it is a shame we never got a chance to know him. Wait, how's that for irony, "The Phantom" was his nickname! Back to my dictionary, it says here that a "phantom" is "something apparently seen, heard, or sensed, but having no physical identity; a ghost or an apparition." Really, I couldn't make up stuff this good. Opponents of the slick moving feather-fisted German could likely attest to this moniker being a fitting one. You couldn't be sure that he hit you, his punches were so light, but you sure had a hard time finding him in the ring to land a meaningful shot against him.

With the absence of Ottke in the Super Middleweight rankings and Welsh WBO trinket-holder Joe Calzaghe moving up to Light Heavyweight, a committee will rule the division. It will remain mostly a European committee of fighters largely unknown to those residing in the United States. Denmark's Mads Larsen and Danilo Haussler of Germany will now contest the IBF title Ottke polished each night for 6 years between 1998 to 2004.

Fellow German Markus Beyer is the official WBC Super Middleweight champion with Australia's (hey, how did they let an Aussie in there?!?) Danny Green carrying that title on an

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interim basis. Once-defeated Anthony Mundine, also from the Land Down Under, guards the WBA title and has seemingly lost out on his opportunity to revenge the shocking KO loss he suffered to Ottke. It wasn't shocking that Mundine lost, only that Ottke was able to knock somebody out.

Canadian Eric Lucas surrendered his belt to Beyer in 2003, and lost his subsequent shot at the interim title by TKO to the hard-hitting Green. Too bad, Lucas was as close as there was to an American in the mix. Canada isn't that far off after all, but then again Lucas is French-Canadian so that wouldn't count anyway.

Ottke did it for so many years, never falling, nor making nary a sound. Having never known that he was even there, it seems ironic to suggest that the division just might miss its champion.