

A Rank Heavyweight Division

Written by Steve Kim
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After a flurry of heavyweight title fights in the month of April we've gotten a little clearer picture of just how this division stacks up.

Lamon Brewster, would start things off by stunning Wladimir Klitschko for the WBO belt. Then a week later in Madison Square Garden, Chris Byrd would barely hold onto his IBF belt by drawing with Andrew Golota. And John Ruiz would do his impersonation of the 2002 Ohio State Buckeyes football team, he wasn't pretty but he somehow got the job done in stopping Fres Oquendo in 11 rounds. Then, this past weekend, Vitaly Klitschko, would save his families reputation in avenging his brothers loss to Corrie Sanders in picking up the vacant WBC title.

In the aftermath of all this action, I was going to do a top ten ranking of todays heavyweights. I started analyzing things, weighing the merits of each boxer and really thinking about where they stack up. Ok, but I hit a glitch. In doing a top ten, I couldn't find ten heavyweights worthy of listing.

That's a bit of a problem, it's like having only five bucks when you go up to the register with twenty dollars worth of groceries. So being the resourceful guy that I am, I did what most of corporate America has been doing the past few years- I downsized. Since I could only come up with five heavyweights that are truly worthy of being mentioned, I did a top five. Now, I knew that division was a bit shallow, what I didn't realize until further inspection was that it's about as deep as a kiddie pool.

Outside the top five- which by the way, could change very quickly at any time- you have a cast of 'has beens', 'never weres' and question marks. It truly is a motley crew.

1- Vitaly Klitschko

THE CASE FOR KLITSCHKO: In his last three bouts, Klitschko has performed well against Lennox Lewis, Kirk Johnson and Corrie Sanders. Unlike his brother, Wladimir, Klitschko may not have the offensive skills but he has proven to be a much tougher fighter- who has overcome the stigma of quitting on his stool against Chris Byrd in 2000- and he has a much sturdier chin.

It's clear that Klitschko is a fighter who's confidence is rising and is in his physical prime.

THE CASE AGAINST HIM: Ok, on the surface, Lewis, Johnson and Sanders are a formidable trio. But you know what? Those guys were either old or out of shape, or old guys that came out of shape. How much can we really read into those victories?

And it says here, he still has unfinished business with Byrd. Say what you want, yeah, he may have been winning that whole fight, but he is the one who stopped fighting. You don't get credit for winning the 100 meter dash if you stop sprinting after 92 meters, no matter how far you're ahead.

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2- Chris Byrd

THE CASE FOR BYRD: The crafty southpaw out of Flint, Michigan is one of boxing's enigma's. Here's a guy who wins a major heavyweight title and he still can't get fights. But in recent years when he has gotten the opportunity, he has beaten the likes of Evander Holyfield and David Tua.

You might loathe his style, but he's a difficult fight for anybody.

THE CASE AGAINST HIM: Have you seen his last two fights? There are a lot of folks out there who believe he has received two gift decisions against Fres Oquendo and then Andrew Golota. In the eyes of many, he has no business with the IBF belt around his waist.

3- John Ruiz

THE CASE FOR RUIZ: I've become a bit of a convert here, no, I'll never be a huge fan- or for that matter a small one- of his herky-jerky style that infuriates the audience, but I give him this, he finds way to win fights against 'name' heavyweights. After his 19-second blowout loss at the heavy hands of David Tua, he now has wins against Evander Holyfield, Hasim Rahman and Fres Oquendo on his ledger.

At the end of the day, it is results that really matter, right?

4- James Toney

THE CASE FOR TONEY: Ok, so 'Lights Out' has had only one, real, legitimate heavyweight fight, but he was impressive in dispatching Evander Holyfield like no other. No, I'm not saying Holyfield is 'the Real Deal' any longer, but who had dominated him like that? Also, let's not forget this, boxing, is a game of skill and this guy has as much as anybody in the game. He truly fits the description of an 'old school fighter'.

He'll fight anybody, anytime, anyplace.

5- Lamon Brewster

THE CASE FOR BREWSTER: The case for him begins and ends with one fight, his knockout win over Wladimir Klitschko. Coming in as a heavy underdog, he would take his best shots and then KO Klitschko with a series of left hooks. Now, the question is, is he here to stay or is he another one-hit wonder in the vain of Buster Douglas and Hasim Rahman?

THE CASE AGAINST HIM: Can you name me another good win on his record besides Klitschko? You can't because there isn't one. Also, he lost in lopsided fights to both Clifford Etienne and Charles Shufford, who aren't exactly Ali and Frazier. Brewster, needs another big win to solidify his standing as one of the games elite big men.

THE MOTLEY CREW

Ok, so who could've been in my top ten? Well, here were my choices...

- David Tua: Can anyone remember the last time he's fought? Also, even during his active era,

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- wasn't he exposed as a one-dimensional fighter with severe limitations against classy boxers?
- Mike Tyson: Last time he was any good was when George Bush was president. The first one, without the 'Dubya'.
 - Hasim Rahman: So far he's trying not to become the 21st century version of Buster Douglas.
 - Jameel McCline: Has rebounded well after freezing up like a snowman against Wlad Klitschko. He is now the number one contender to Byrd's IBF belt. Based on recent history, he will give Byrd trouble.
 - Joe Mesi: Two questions, one, is he any good? I mean really, is even at the level of Tommy Morrison? And secondly, will he even be permitted to fight again based on recent reports of bleeding on the brain following his bout with Vasilliy Jirov?
 - Juan Carlos Gomez: This former cruiserweight titlist has skills but he really hasn't done much in the heavyweight division.
 - Evander Holyfield: Now, why would I list him? Simple, because of his name you know he'll get another big fight. And if the circumstances are right, he might even win it. Crazier things have happened.