Written by Charles Jay
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Winky Wright, the IBOP world junior middleweight champion, travels out of his own division on May 14 when he meets Felix "Tito" Trinidad in Las Vegas, in a match that presents intriguing challenges for both parties. Wright is making the move up to 160 pounds, where Trinidad, a fighter who has carried some of his power with him, will be waiting. And Tito, who has customarily faced difficulty with slick boxers, will have no cakewalk trying to get through against a southpaw who is proficient defensively.

A couple of internet sportsbooks have already established a number on the fight. Olympic Sports posts Trinidad the -220 favorite (where you must bet $2.20 to make a $1 profit), while the takeback on Wright is +180 (win $1.80 with a $1 wager). At Pinnacle Sports, Tito is at -205, with Winky at +185. Pinnacle has an early over/under proposition available, Over 11.5 rounds is -121, with the "under" at +101.

To me, the interesting angle here involves how Trinidad will deal with Wright's boxing ability. Against Oscar De la Hoya, Trinidad was befuddled for most of the night as Oscar put on an exceptional boxing display, but much of it came as a result of De la Hoya's ability to move about the ring and nail Trinidad before getting out. Wright is a different kind of boxer; he doesn't exhibit a heck of a lot of movement - certainly not as much as we saw from De la Hoya - preferring to stand in front of opponents and dare them to get through his defense, all the while looking for the occasion to throw deft counterpunches. This style will give Wright the chance to catch the less-defensive Trinidad coming straight in, but it should also afford Tito the opportunity to land against someone who should be within his range, and whom he doesn't have to chase.

Wright's ability to make Trinidad miss shots and leave himself wide open will be a key. And Trinidad needs to be able to sting this guy early. I see it as a test of Wright's chin and Trinidad's stamina. It also has the potential to be a great chess match - the kind of fight a boxing purist will especially enjoy.

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In Germany, at an arena named after the late Max Schmeling, two heavyweights who will likely never be mistaken for Schmeling square off. Nicolai Valuev and Attila Levin fight for the "WBA Intercontinental" heavyweight belt on Saturday. Valuev, who is rated #5 by the WBA, has much more to lose. Neither fighter has encountered much in the way of stand-up opposition thus far, and Levin, a Swede who is handled by Angelo Dundee, was stopped by Jeremy Williams in his last fight nine months ago. Valuev (39-0) has been handled very carefully by promoter Wilfred Sauerland, and at seven feet and well over 300 pounds, he's going to have a considerable size advantage.

As of early Saturday morning, there was a middling (or "scalping") opportunity out there on the Valuev-Levin fight. At BlueSQ.com, Valuev is available at -350 (lay $3.50 to win $1 profit), while both Pinnacle and Olympic Sports had Levin at +380. As you can see, under this scenario,

where the takeback on the underdog is greater than the number you have to lay on the favorite, the player can manipulate his wagers so he can actually bet both ways and make a profit.

Also on that show, Sinan Samil Sam (22-2, 15 KO's), the "WBC International" heavyweight champ, will defend his crown against former U.S. Olympian Lawrence Clay-Bey, who has lost only two of 23 career bouts. Many of the usual suspects constituted Sam's early opposition, including Thomas Williams and Bradley Rone. But he won the European title in February of 2003 with a devastating sixth-round stoppage over Tyson conqueror Danny Williams. After suffering back-to-back losses to the difficult southpaw Juan Carlos Gomez and the capable Luan Krasniqi, Sam has rebounded with four straight wins. Clay-Bey is 39 years old, and has never really hit the big time. With losses to Cliff Etienne and Eliecer Castillo, he's got to prove he can be a threat to heavyweight contenders. An upset over Sam might do that.

Backers of Sam can get their best price at Pinnacle, where he is -341, compared with the 4/1 you'd have to lay at Intertops, BlueSQ.com and William Hill. Clay-Bey brings back +311 at Pinnacle, the best price we've seen thus far.

A third 12-round fight on that show involves Arthur Abraham and Ian Gardner for the "WBA Intercontinental" middleweight title. Abraham's biggest win was last September, a 12-round TKO over Nader Hamdan, who took a 36-1 record into the fight. Gardner, a southpaw handled by the Petronelli brothers, has lost only to Peter Manfredo Jr., a fight he took too early in his career. In another fight he probably had no business taking, he went into Troy Rowland's hometown and won a decision in just his second pro outing. In his last fight, he won a 12-round decision over Tokunbo Olajide.

A few outlets have a number on the Abraham-Gardner fight. BlueSQ.com has Abraham a -187/+137 favorite, while Olympic Sports has Abraham at -220, with a takeback of +180 on Gardner. Pinnacle has the dime line, with Abraham laying -193 to +183 for Gardner. Pinnacle's over/under is 11.5 rounds, with the "under" a -120/+110 choice.

In terms of looking at this from a handicapping perspective, it bears mentioning than in a place like Germany, where traveling opponents come to face the "house" fighters, no one is being brought over there for the purposes of winning. Indeed, no one will come away with a win if the promoters and the commission can help it. Conditions sometimes are made intentionally difficult; officials are partisan, to say the least, and the hope of winning a decision is remote. Let's put it this way - rarely do overseas fighters go over there and pull off upsets, whether they deserve it or not. And even when they win, they can get beat. Just ask Glen Johnson, who stopped Thomas Ulrich in Germany only to have the local officials trump up a positive "drug test" as a way of trying to get the fight declared a no-contest.