

Boxing News: Tszyu-Hatton Rumble June 4 on Showtime

Written by News Article

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NEW YORK (April 6, 2005) – In a matchup that has all the makings of a classic, Kostya Tszyu will meet the enormously popular Ricky Hatton in the challenger's backyard before 18,000 fans at MEN Arena in Manchester, England. Universally recognized as boxing's premier 140-pounder and one of the world's top pound-for-pound boxers, Tszyu will face a daunting challenge when he defends his IBF junior welterweight title against undefeated IBF No. 1 contender Hatton on Showtime.

Tszyu (31-1 25 KOs), of Sydney, Australia by way of Serov, Russia, says a fight with Hatton (38-0 28 KOs) presents exactly the kind of challenge he needs.

"This fight has motivated me to train harder than I ever have before," Tszyu said, who has won 13 consecutive bouts, 11 by knockout. "Hatton is a very good fighter. He wants to get something that has belonged to me for many years. I am looking forward to the fight because I have the hunger too. Hatton will give me a tremendous physical challenge, but I will be ready."

Tszyu is not concerned that his 17th world title fight will begin at such an unusual time. "Actually, it will benefit me more than Hatton because 11 a.m. Aussie time is 2 a.m. in England," Tszyu said. "When I go to Manchester, I will train at two in the morning, but I do not intend to change my routine at all . . . Hatton will come at me, especially with the big crowd urging him on. He learned to move forward and apply pressure at the beginning of his career. I, on the other hand, can box or slug. I will have to fight smartly because Hatton is strong."

In his last start, his first in 22 months, Tszyu retained his IBF belt with a third-round TKO over IBF Interim Champion Sharmba Mitchell November 4, 2004, on Showtime from Phoenix, Arizona.

Unlike their initial encounter, which Tszyu won via a disputed seventh-round stoppage February 3, 2001, this one was decisive. Showing he was back and as good as new - Tszyu showed no effects from the injuries to his Achilles' tendon and left shoulder that required surgery and twice forced the rematch to be postponed - Kostya turned what was supposed to be a dangerous task into a cakewalk. He was in total command of Sharmba and the fight.

His powerful right hand - Kostya's money punch - did most of the significant damage. Tszyu floored Mitchell four times. The referee stopped the bout at 2:48 of round number three.

Tszyu said "I have a history of facing lefthanders and I know how to fight them. I worked a lot for that fight. I will work just as hard for Hatton."

Tszyu's only defeat came on May 31, 1997, when challenger Vince Phillips scored a dramatic 10th-round TKO in Atlantic City to capture the IBF junior welterweight title. Ring Magazine listed the bout as its "Upset of the Year." Nearly six years later on April 5, 2003, Hatton successfully defended his WBU light welterweight title for the ninth time with a lopsided 12-round unanimous

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decision over Phillips.

“The Thunder from Down Under” added the IBF belt to his glitzy wardrobe with a second-round TKO over previously undefeated Zab Judah November 3, 2001. He captured the WBA crown when he defeated Mitchell the first time. Tszyu won the WBC 140-pound title by knocking out Miguel Angel Gonzalez in the 10th round on August 21, 1999.

For Hatton of Manchester, England, the bout against Tszyu is his chance to show he is a legitimate contender with the talent and ability to be a world champion.

“I have waited a long time to prove myself against the very best, and now I am getting that chance against a boxer regarded as the king in my weight class,” Hatton said. “At times, it really gets on my nerves when people say I am not world-class. I have done all that is asked of me. I have not had a lot of close calls. I should receive a lot more credit than I do.”

Hatton successfully defended his WBU title for the fourteenth time with a tenth round knockout over Ray Oliveira in his last start on December 11, 2004, in London. In his other starts last year, Hatton recorded a fifth round TKO over Michael Stewart, a 12-round unanimous decision over Carlos Vilches, and a sixth-round TKO over Dennis Holbaek Pedersen.

While Tszyu presents a major step up in class, Hatton feels he can take advantage of what he believes are chinks in the champ’s armor.

“As strong as Tszyu is, he is not an exceptional in-fighter. So if I move in quick and throw punches I will have some success. He just pushed and shoved against Mitchell and Judah. However, because he was so physically strong, he could get away with it,” Hatton said. “I will deliver volumes of combinations to the head and body. He will not be able to push me around. My danger zone is going to be where Tszyu is in the range to explode one of his big right hands. I have a lot of respect for his right. I do not want to see how strong it is.”

Tickets for the eagerly-awaited fight sold out in two-and-one-half hours. Showtime will televise the fight on Saturday, June 4, 2005, at 9 p.m. ET/PT (delayed on the West Coast). The highly-anticipated event, which begins LIVE at 2 a.m. in England, will be co-promoted by Frank Warren’s Sports Network and Millenium Events.

For information on Showtime Championship Boxing and “ShoBox: The New Generation” telecasts, including complete fighter bios and records, related stories and more, please go the Showtime website at <http://www.sho.com/boxing> .