

## Top 25 Heavyweights (As of September 1, 2005)

Written by JE Grant

Tuesday, 06 September 2005 19:00

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This is the fourth monthly edition of the Grant Top 25 Heavyweights. There was plenty of heavyweight action this month, though in some cases the word 'action' is used very loosely. Hasim Rahman did only enough to win against Monte Barrett, but if his goal was to throw a scare into Vitali Klitschko, it didn't appear that it worked.

Besides Rahman and Barrett, the second tier of the division was active. Audley Harrison, Jameel McCline, and Shannon Briggs scored stay-busy wins. Owen Beck was upset by Ray Austin, edging Beck out of the ratings, at least for now.

Klitschko and Rahman are set for November and Brewster makes one of those alphabet mandatories this month. Chris Byrd has a date to defend against DaVarryl Williamson in a fight that virtually no fan is clamoring for now or ever. The disgraceful IBF rating jump that bumped Williamson over Wladimir Klitschko (despite losing to him) even lessened the legitimacy of the "mandatory." None of that is Williamson's fault, and at least he is a competent fighter.

The one bright spot in the Klitschko-Williamson ratings debacle is that we get to see Klitschko take on power-hitter Sam Peter. Both fighters are to be commended for putting it on the line without a belt attached.

Expect some more substantial moves in next month's edition.

1. **Vitali Klitschko**, Ukraine – WBC Champion (Last Month #1) The final edict is in: Klitschko will fight Hasim Rahman in November in a match to be promoted by Bob Arum's Top Rank. It's clear that if the Rahman who showed up in Chicago against Barrett shows up in the ring facing Klitschko, Rahman will be counting the overhead lights. Rahman was ponderous even while dominating. Klitschko will be coming off a long layoff, and that could've been part of Rahman's problem against Barrett. Klitschko can't count out Rahman; the Rock's potent jab did gleam through often enough to rattle Barrett and virtually shut him down for most of the fight. Look for this fight to happen in November.

2. **Hasim Rahman**, USA (Last Month #2) He slogged past Monte Barrett to win the right to face Klitschko. Nothing in the bout with Barrett inspired confidence that he can overwhelm Klitschko. Indeed, if the last round of the fight is indicative of anything it's that his chin remains a worrisome aspect of his game. Barrett was as tentative as anyone we've seen this close to capturing a shot at a world title and still he had the Rock on shaky legs at the end. Perhaps the many months off slowed him, but he better pump up the volume if he's to take the belt from Klitschko.

3. **Lamon Brewster**, USA – WBO Champion (Last month #3) All systems appear a go for a September 28 match with WBO number one ranked Luan Krasniqi in Germany on Max Schmeling's 100th birthday celebration. I just don't know why Brewster is going to Krasniqi's turf, especially given the spate of curious decisions there of late. Time to get this alphabet

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nonsense over with so he can face some big names and garner some substantial paydays.

4. **Wladimir Klitschko**, Ukraine (Last month #4) Next up is a 24 September showdown with unbeaten power-hitter Samuel Peter. A win in this bout would make Wladimir the darling of the boxing world all over again. He is taking a giant risk – and he will be amply rewarded if he can pull it out. Peter is today's boxing phenom. We know we like to see him on the attack. We think he's for real. But, we haven't seen him in with the big boys yet. Wladimir will either send Peter back to the drawing board or sit home in a few months and watch him fight for a title. I won't be surprised by a Klitschko win.

5. **Chris Byrd**, USA – IBF Champion (Last month #5) Will face DaVarryl Williamson October 1st. Byrd has been off for almost a year and he's facing someone who should not be there. Byrd is a great human being and does the best he has with what he has. Unfortunately the opponent does nothing to capture the public's attention. This fight is almost a guaranteed money loser. At this stage of his boxing life, Byrd should throw caution – and his nearly worthless IBF belt – to the wind and chase the money a Vitali Klitschko fight would bring him.

6. **James Toney**, USA (Last month #6) In perfect "Lights Out" fashion, Toney comes right back from his suspension to face a live opponent in Dominick "The Southern Disaster" Guinn. Although Guinn has skidded a bit lately, he showed early promise as a boxer-puncher. His left-hook, landed cleanly, can take down just about anyone in the division – even James Toney. An upset is not out of the question. That's just what I like about Toney; he doesn't take the easy road back to a title shot. A win here puts him firmly in the mix for a shot soon against V. Klitschko or Chris Byrd (but not John Ruiz because he's out of luck for two years with the WBA as a result of the steroid debacle). No matter, he does not need the WBA to reclaim glory.

7. **Calvin Brock**, USA (Last month #8) We don't know what is on the horizon for our newest "American" hope. Brock is probably ready for at least a couple of the alphabet titlists now. Vitali Klitschko may – may – be a bridge too far right now, but Brock would figure to be highly competitive. There's always room in boxing for a highly skilled, determined heavyweight. Brock, 30, has to take a few chances given his age. I think he will and will make it pay off.

8. **Samuel Peter**, Nigeria (Last month #9) The big fight is on in September with Wladimir Klitschko. This may be the most important non-title fight of the year. A win propels him to stardom. A loss? Well, he's only 24.

9. **Audley Harrison**, England (Last month #11) Stopped a tough journeyman Robert Wiggins August 18th. He'll need to step up the competition very quickly. He's running out of time.

10. **Monte Barrett**, USA (Last month #7) He fought a thoroughly uninspired performance against Rahman. He barely captured two rounds and appeared downright skittish throughout. Nothing in his game seemed to be on and he offered very little offense. It's back to the drawing board and at 34 time is running out. He just seems to not have enough to keep the really big men off. And, unfortunately for him, giants presently populate the division. Who knows what's next for him.

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11. **John Ruiz**, USA - WBA Champion (Last month #10) We've started hearing those nightmarish Kevin McBride defense rumors again. If that fight comes off, help us all. Ruiz wants respect. McBride is not along the path to it. He may be forced to engage the winner of the upcoming Valuev-Donald bout. Is there no end to the madness? If John Ruiz really wants the big time, he'll drop his belt and face Byrd, Klitschko, Brewster or some combination thereof. Even facing the winner of W. Klitschko-Peter would do it. I doubt he'll enter the ring against any of his fellow belt holders or the other major contenders anytime soon.

12. **Jameel McCline**, USA (Last month #12) Stopped Steve Pannell in three round August 26th in a stay busy fight. He'll be tough for anyone. It will take a true top ten heavyweight to beat the big man.

13. **Danny Williams**, England (Last month #13) He's still in limbo following his pullout against Matt Skelton in July. He won't last much longer in this column. What gives Danny?

14. **Corrie Sanders**, South Africa (Last month #14) Corrie are you still out there? You're testing our patience.

15. **Nicolay Valuev**, Russia (Last month #15) Meets Larry Donald October 1st in a WBA title eliminator for the right to step in the ring with the seemingly invincible John Ruiz.

16. **DaVarryl Williamson**, USA (Last month #16) A Byrd match will happen sometime this decade, or so the story goes.

17. **Oleg Maskaev**, Uzbekistan (Last month #17) Last we heard he is scheduled to face Sinan Samil Sam in a WBC title elimination match. We haven't seen a date set yet. Hopefully the WBC will forget.

18. **David Tua**, New Zealand (Last month #18) Had his date with Cisse Salif changed to October 21st.

19. **Shannon Briggs**, USA (Last month #23) Stopped ancient Ray Mercer in seven rounds on August 26th. He's now won 11 of his last 12. Time to step up the heat.

20. **Serguei Lyakhovich**, Belarus (Last month #20) Was scheduled to meet Owen Beck in August but an injury forced a withdrawal. Too bad, Ray Austin stepped in and captured an upset decision.

21. **Fres Oquendo**, USA (Puerto Rico) (Last month #19) He hasn't fought since losing to John Ruiz in April of last year. Last month we noted that he had signed with Lou DiBella. When is something going to come of it?

22. **Dominick Guinn**, USA (Last month #21) He has a chance to redeem himself big-time against Toney. A win in that fight could mean a title shot soon.

23. **Luan Krasniqi**, Germany (via Kosovo) (Last month #22) Lamon Brewster awaits

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September 28th. Ho hum.

24. **Matt Skelton**, England – British champion is probably waiting for a world-title call. Perhaps a defense of his British crown versus Audley Harrison (Last month #25) to give us a little view of how he can go against a fighter with real talent?

25. **Ray Austin**, USA (Last month unrated) Scored an upset decision over Owen Beck. Also had a recent draw with Larry Donald. Some kind of title fight can't be far behind.

Others on the fringes in no particular order:

**Owen Beck**, USA (Last month #24) What the heck, Beck? The talented Jamaican drops his second decision in a row, this time to a fill-in for Seguei Lyakhovich, Ray Austin. The fight was close – but why? He was supposed to clobber this guy. Back to the drawing board. He's back out of the top 25.

**Oliver McCall**, USA – Who would have been inclined to think the Atomic Bull could make a comeback at 40? His booming KO of Poland's Przemyslaw Saleta on the Rahman-Barrett undercard will undoubtedly get him another money fight. Good for him.

**Vassily Jirov**, Kazakhstan – Still licking his wounds following upset draw with Orlin Norris. He was very sluggish. Many are pushing for him to return to the cruiserweights. He just doesn't seem to have the giddy-up as a heavy.

**Lance Whitaker**, USA – Stopped a hapless Louis Monaco, 14-30-4, in three rounds on August 26th. Even he knows that he'll have to do a lot more to get himself back into the mix.

**Alexander Dimitrenko**, Ukraine – Likely to fight on the Brewster-Krasniqi undercard. It will be interesting to see if his handlers start upping the bar.

**Ruslan Chagaev**, Uzbekistan – Okay, I've haven't seen this guy in action but I keep getting email about him. Some folks say he's a talented youngster. He's currently campaigning in Germany. Maybe I can scrounge up a DVD.