Do you remember the old saying *The bigger they are, the harder they fall*? It perfectly fits Nicolay Valuev – at least judging by October 1. Nicolay's performance against Larry Donald was so disappointing that even the Russian fighter couldn't smile at the verdict. The scorecards were 114-114, 115-113 and 117-112, but Valuev knew he had lost. Those in attendance knew it too, booing vehemently when the ring announcer read the scorecards. (
Five points for Valuev? Come on!
). Even Nicolay's promoter, Wilfried Sauerland, had his doubts since he had a worried expression on his face for the entire fight.

Don King, on the other hand, started smiling after the end of the first round and never stopped. What Don King saw, like everybody else, was Larry Donald giving a serious boxing lesson to Valuev. The smaller Donald knew that he couldn't brawl with the giant; that's why he danced around him, throwing fast jabs followed by combinations. Even when the Russian fighter was hurt, Donald didn't stay close to him for longer than he needed. He avoided being caught in clinches and the risk of being knocked out (one Valuev right hand would have been enough to get the job done).

In short, Larry Donald showed to the world how to fight a taller and heavier man and come out victorious. Forget the judges; to understand who won you had just to look at the boxers' faces: Valuev had many cuts which drew blood, whereas Donald's face was clean. The American looked only a bit tired, like he had just ended a sparring session.

Here in Europe, most people know that a non-German fighter seldom gets a decision in Germany, but this time the judges went too far. They didn't understand that such decisions hurt the credibility of the sport and make boxing fans angry. Beyond that, a controversial victory cannot change the fact that Valuev showed his limits: he is slow, always fights the same way and (yes, sir) he can be hurt! Unmercifully, the replays showed Nicolay's expressions every time he got hit by hard punches: he was suffering. More than once, he looked on the verge of a knockdown. But he is a real toughman and kept himself up. Still, you have to wonder what would have happened against a power-puncher like Samuel Peter.

Before the October 1 fight, Valuev was considered unstoppable ... especially after four consecutive wins against well known Paolo Vidoz, Gerald Nobles, Attila Levin and Clifford Etienne. He simply destroyed Vidoz, forcing the referee to stop the action during the 9th round. The Italian got a broken jaw which required a titanium plaque. Thereafter, he changed his nickname from
Gladiator
to
Titanium Jaw
(he put it on his ring jackets too). Against Nobles, the Russian won by disqualification at the 4th round. The beating he delivered to Attila Levin (3

rd

round KO) was so bad that the Swede announced his retirement. Clifford Etienne also lasted 3 rounds.

Those victories erased any doubts about Valuev, whose record was full of wins against journeymen. After the poor showing against Donald, the doubts came back: *Is he good enough to win the world heavyweight championship?*
Considering the current holders of the four major titles, the answer is yes. Chris Byrd (IBF), John Ruiz (WBA), Vitali Klitschko (WBC) and Lamon Brewster (WBO) can be hardly described as invincible. Valuev can, after all, knock everybody out with a single punch. Now the question is:
When will he get a title shot?
Probably, next December 17 against John Ruiz. The fight should be held in Germany, but you have to wonder if Ruiz will want to risk his title on his opponent's territory – especially after what happened to Larry Donald.

Even if the Ruiz fight won't take place, you can bet your bottom dollar that Nicolay Valuev will get a title shot. His promoter, Wilfried Sauerland, is one of the best in the business. He is as good as Don King and Bob Arum. His shows are as spectacular as the Las Vegas shows. Sauerland invested a lot of money in the Russian powerhouse and has turned him into a big attraction. The huge photos of Valuev inside Oldenburg's stadium prove how much Sauerland believes in his man.

After two years under Sauerland's wing, everybody knows who Nicolay Valuev is. In Germany, his name is enough to attract 10,000 spectators at the stadium and convince millions of people to stay home on Saturday night to watch the fight on TV. Since being managed by Sauerland, the Russian also won the WBA International and Intercontinental Titles, and has moved up in the WBA rankings. Of course these are minor titles, but much more useful than the Pan Asian and Russian belts (Valuev held them both). Anyway, a fight against and alphabet titleholder will show us how good Nicolay Valuev really is. Until then, he will be just one of the many contenders around.

Nicolay Valuev

Alias	The Beast From The East
Birthplace	St. Petersburg, Russia
Born	1973-08-21
Stance	Orthodox
Reach	85
Height	213
Manager	Wilfried Sauerland
Trainer	Manuel Gabrielian
Record	42 wins (31 KOs) 1 no-contest