

Say Lebewohl to Your Title

Written by Marc Lichtenfeld
Monday, 20 February 2006 19:00

*"Out there is a fortune waiting to be had
You think I'll let it go, you're mad.
You got another thing coming." – Judas Priest*

I know that Chris Byrd has been frustrated by not getting the big money fights he was promised by Don King. But going over to Germany to fight Wladimir Klitschko on April 22nd is akin to putting his title up for bid on eBay. There is no way he is coming home with that belt.

There are few boxing writers who have been as keen on Chris Byrd as I have over the years. I was singing his praises in the late '90s when no one would fight him and he had to resort to accepting challenges from Maurice Harris, just to stay busy. At the time, I knew he was not a crowd-pleaser, but I love a boxer who can make a man miss. There are a lot of weary arms that have swung at Chris Byrd and missed over the past twelve years.

In a 1999 interview, Chris told me he was old school. He would fight anyone. And in fact he did. Byrd went to Germany to face Vitali Klitschko, who at the time was one of the most feared heavyweights in the world. He was considered unstoppable. Byrd took the fight on two weeks notice, got sick in Germany and still fought.

Six months later he again went back to Germany to fight Wladimir Klitschko, who gave him a twelve round beating. In between the eleventh and twelfth, Byrd begged his father not to stop the fight, despite having no chance of knocking out Klitschko.

Byrd fought Ike Ibeabuchi with bruised ribs.

He made a highly regarded and feared David Tua look foolish.

And now he's taking on a guy who already beat him soundly in the guy's backyard. You may hate Chris Byrd's style, but you have to give him credit for having a pair. I can't think of any heavyweight who has faced the same level of competition.

If the fight were taking place in his hometown of Las Vegas, I'd have to say the odds of him winning would be 50-50 at best. Chris has not looked good in his past four fights. The last time he was impressive was over three years ago, when he defeated Evander Holyfield. Klitschko on the other hand has rebounded and looked very sharp against top rated Samuel Peter.

Considering that Klitschko beat him once already and Byrd doesn't have the firepower to take advantage of Klitschko's weak chin, I'd say it's going to be another long tough night.

But let's say Byrd is as good as he ever was. He makes the Ukrainian miss and pops him with counters all night long. Will the Germans let him go home with that title?

Say Lebewohl to Your Title

Written by Marc Lichtenfeld
Monday, 20 February 2006 19:00

Did they let John Ruiz? If the fight goes twelve rounds, there is no way Byrd gets the decision. But here's another likely scenario – they do to Byrd what they did to Richard Hall.

You may remember Richard Hall challenged Dariusz Michalczewski a few years back. Hall was beating the tar out of him, clearly on his way to winning a marginal belt. With about a minute to go in the 11th round, the fight was stopped due to a swelling on Hall's eye. This was a guy who protested an 11th round stoppage when he was getting annihilated by a prime Roy Jones. At the time Hall was fighting with the chicken pox! Hall clearly could have gone another 4 minutes with the limited Michalczewski.

Hall went back to Germany for a rematch. In a fight that was closer, he suddenly found himself being rescued by the referee after taking a good shot from his opponent.

History is littered with injustices that have taken place inside German boxing arenas. Byrd's only hope is to knock Klitschko out. Considering Klitschko can dish it out but can't take it, that's not an impossible task. On the other hand Byrd hasn't stopped an opponent since scoring a 3rd round TKO over 18-9 Jeff Pegues in 2002.

I'm sorry to see Chris' reign end. He's a good man and a terrific boxer. But he should know better than to go to Germany to defend his title.

Jabs

- The aforementioned Richard Hall takes on Glen Johnson on February 24th on Pay Per View. If Hall is focused and in shape it could be a hell of a fight. Hall is tough as nails and packs a big punch.
- I really enjoyed last week's Contender show on ESPN. Manfredo surprised me with how good he looked. Brian Kenny, who is normally terrific, was a little too smitten with Manfredo. The bias was obvious.
- Speaking of ESPN, I think Joe Tessitore has become one of the best boxing play-by-play men in the business.