

The Hits Just Keep Comin'

Written by Joey Knish

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Back in March of this year boxing fans were treated to the opportunity to see one of the world's finest fighters as super middleweight champion Joe Calzaghe took apart American superhero Jeff "Left Hook" Lacy in Manchester, England. The opportunity to see overseas fighters in action is one that still escapes me far too often. I can watch the best soccer clubs of England, Italy and Germany tackle the opposition on any given Saturday, but the best of Europe's fighters still go unseen by most of us stateside. That may be about to change.

HBO has bought the rights for the next biggest super middleweight bout as Mikkel Kessler and Markus Beyer tangle in Copenhagen, Denmark for the right to call out Calzaghe. The two title bouts will be on the same television broadcast as "The Pride of Wales" Calzaghe's next title fight, October 14th, against Sakio Bika of Cameroon. "The Scorpion" Bika held WBC champion Beyer to a four-round technical draw in his last bout, and has only lost once in 23 fights, a slim decision loss to hyperactive Sam Soliman back down at 160 pounds.

All four major titles of the 168-pound division will be on the line on one night with the Calzaghe-Bika fight at the M.E.N. Arena in Manchester, England with Kessler-Beyer getting it on in Denmark. With Beyer representing the WBC, Kessler the WBA, Calzaghe the IBF and WBO, it is an opportunity to be seized by viewers and kudos must go out to HBO. It is a unique opportunity for fight fans and one I hope signals a trend for the future. I always lament the fact that great bouts have taken place overseas without the opportunity for our prying eyes to get in on the action.

Sven Ottke was another such super middleweight fighter that I heard many great things of, but never witnessed in action. "The Phantom" amassed a 36-0-0 record as a professional and retired after successfully defending his IBF Super Middleweight title for the 21st time! Twenty-one consecutive title defenses of a major title yet virtually unknown on US soil. Ottke also retired as the WBA's champion after winning his second belt in 2003 with a victory over Byron Mitchell, a title he also defended successfully four times before his retirement.

The Calzaghe-Bika bout will be the feature bout on HBO's Boxing After Dark series, with Kessler-Beyer following it to provide sufficient motivation to keep us from touching the remote.

Kessler, undefeated at 37-0-0 with 28 KOs, will be the hometown favorite against the German invader Beyer. Born in Copenhagen, the "Viking Warrior" won the WBA strap after punishing Puerto Rican tough guy Manny Siaca over seven rounds in 2004. He has successfully defended that title twice, defeating former champions Anthony Mundine of Australia and Canadian Eric Lucas. Kessler management Team Palle gained the hometown edge for their fighter, the rest lies in Kessler's heavy hands.

"Boom Boom" Beyer has been holding the WBC Super Middleweight belt going back to 2003. He lost it once during that span, losing a split decision to Cristian Sanavia in June of 2004, but recaptured the belt just four months later by knocking the Italian out in the sixth round. With just

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13 knockouts in 37 fights, the southpaw Beyer (34-2-1) will certainly be the boxer in the bout looking to take a decision victory over undefeated Kessler. Wilfried Sauerland, one of Germany's two power promoters along with Klaus-Peter Kohl, manages Beyer under the experienced eye of veteran trainer Ulli Wegner.

Any Super Middleweight rankings that do not have Joe Calzaghe, Mikkel Kessler and Markus Beyer as the top three fighters in the division simply are not accurate. These are the best three boxers in the division today and, thanks to the magic of television and power of HBO, we get to see them all in one night.

Don't miss it!