

Mel Brooks had something to do with this.

The evidence is thin, even nonexistent, that Don King's tour with Nikolai Valuev follows Brooks' black and white comedy script for "Young Frankenstein."

So far, King hasn't strapped tap shoes to Valuev's feet and forced him to sing "Puttin' on the Ritz" like Peter Boyle – yet. Somehow King and Valuev's Sunderland promoters have duped the public into believing a 7-foot-2, 320-pound man squaring off with an opponent 100 pounds lighter is a solid main event match in Rosemont, Ill.

Since it will be America's first glimpse of the giant Russian, the fight card is riding a wave of crude sensationalism. Promoter and publicists are working harder to sell imported Valuev than those peddling lunch box-shaped Scions.

Real boxing fans will realize watching Valuev pound challengers – such as his opponent this weekend, Monte Barrett – into the canvas like tent stakes has the shelf life of exactly one fight. Barrett's pretty much the only one claiming victory, and that's only because it's his job.

"Any man that weighs over 200 pounds is able to easily knock another man out," he said Monday at an open workout at Chicago's Windy City Gym. "So I don't worry about Valuev at all. This fight is all about mental preparation. I cannot be concerned about Valuev. I am concerned about me and I am preparing mentally and physically."

You've held your giggles well up to this point, but this is the clincher.

"There are only two things Valuev can do: Lay down and stay down."

Wait, there's more.

"Valuev is going to decide just how bad he wants it. He is going to have to reach deep inside and say to himself: Do I really want to continue to fight this guy?"

... Or is Valuev simply going bring an abrupt ending to this silly game of Whack-A-Mole?

Don King, of course, didn't become Don King by being a fool. Outside of the alleged theft of fighter's funds and other supposed underhanded ordeals, the boisterous promoter has brains to complement his mouth. The proof is in bringing Tomasz Adamek and Paul Briggs in for a rematch of their May 2005 bout.

Adamek may be one of the steadiest light heavyweights in the division. The undefeated Pole (30-0) and current World Boxing Council champ holds his hands high, punches hard and is can move without throwing himself out of rhythm.

Don King, Mel Brooks and Nikolai Valuev

Written by Jesse K. Cox

Tuesday, 03 October 2006 19:00

Briggs (25-2) lost a major decision to Adamek at Chicago's United Center, although a cut over his left eye hindered a lot of his action from that side.

"Yes, I know there will be 6,000 Polish fans in the arena screaming for Adamek," Briggs said Monday. "The louder they scream, the better it is for me. That gets me fired up.

"I fought in Thailand in front of 100,000 screaming fans and it didn't bother me one bit."

Screams of their previous bout didn't necessarily belong to Chicago's Polish contingent. All 12 explosive rounds could have stirred a hoot from anybody in the building because it was that good.

Of course, it had to be that good since the Lamon Brewster-Andrew Golota main event was over before I could finish typing up the undercard results; less than a minute into the first round and Golota was out and never seen again.

Monte Barrett's last outing at the United Center in August 2005 against Hasim Rahman didn't exactly showcase his finer pugilistic ability. The two danced around each under a cacophonous canopy of boos until Rahman earned a lackluster decision.

"In the Rahman fight, I was not mentally ready," Barrett said Monday. "Preparation is everything in boxing."

With a crowd expecting a show, all parties concerned with the main event better prepare to lace up tap shoes and make Mel Brooks proud.

BELOW THE BELT

Halloween costumes are so hard to come up with these days.

I could go as Zab Judah, but I'd probably waste too much time picking caramel apple chunks out of my blingin' grill. Going as Oliver McCall is out of the question for the opposite reason: It would take forever to gum a caramel apple to completion.

Jose Luis Castillo would have worked for me, but I discovered I'm too fat for the costume.

I found the perfect wig to cover my balding head to go as Teddy Atlas, but I just couldn't pull off that kind of animosity toward Donny LaLonde.

Nikolai Valuev seemed like a good idea, but thrift stores are short on angora sweaters.

I suppose when all else fails, grotesque or scary is the way to go. I'm going as Mike Tyson's career. It's not an actual costume, per se. I'll simply spend Oct. 31 making the worst decisions possible and heaving bulky, decorative items at reporters.

Spooky.