

Saturday Night's Boxing Doubleheader

Written by Matthew Aguilar
Friday, 06 October 2006 19:00

Well, it's about time.

After a few weeks of boxing hibernation, the fight game is back with a great fight, and an interesting sideshow.

Let's start with the sideshow.

No one's quite sure what to make of Nikolay Valuev. There's a rumor that the guy can box. Which is something akin to watching King Kong hook off the jab.

If it's true, Valuev may already be the best heavyweight in the world. If you're that damn big, and have skill, too, that gives you a head start over most of the fighters in the top 10. The guess is that he can jab a little. Which is saying something when someone has a jab that starts in St. Petersburg (Russia, not Florida), and ends in Pomona.

Size doesn't matter? Tell that to John Ruiz, whose usual fight plan - maul, grab, rabbit punch, headbutt, weak jab, fall into clinch, maul, rabbit punch, headbutt, weak jab, fall into clinch... - was stymied by the massive Russian. Probably because it's hard to rabbit punch someone in the ass. It's hard to maul a thigh. And, if you dare try to headbutt, you may well be called for a low blow instead.

But, whatever. No one outside of the fighters' families saw the fight, anyway. And that's probably lucky for us.

So now Don King serves up Monte Barrett, a solid pro who brings his best everytime he fights. But the prefight publicity photo looked like Barrett could hop onto Valuev's lap. Are you kidding? How's Barrett supposed to land a punch? By jumping off the turnbuckle and hurdling himself at Valuev, a la Rocky Balboa versus Hulk Hogan in "Rocky 3?"

Why don't we just watch Bernard Hopkins fight Jorge Arce? The dimensions are about the same.

Poor Barrett. He's brought in as an opponent, and he probably deserves better than this (even though he hardly deserves a shot at a "title belt"). He may put up some resistance early on, but how much resistance can a man who's outweighed by 100 pounds really provide?

His nickname is "Two Gunz." He may need about 20 of 'em to compete with this mammoth beast.

At the least, it will be an interesting night. If Valuev wins, hey, at least the horrible heavyweight division has someone that can get the sport on the front pages again. And if Barrett wins, it's a victory for David over Goliath and all the little guys who would like to put the big class bully on

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his behind.

But you probably shouldn't miss Diego Corrales-Joel Casamayor 3 for Valuev.

This one has the makings of a great one. Remember Ali and Frazier, when they fought for the third time? They were so sick of each other that they tried to commit murder. This one is similar.

Casamayor has been getting Corrales' goat with some edgy comments lately, and that will probably put an end to the possible stick-and-move strategy that "Chico" may be contemplating. He'll likely come out with guns blazing, trying to put Casamayor on his back. Just like he did in the first fight in 2003.

Of course, Casamayor likes to box and is tricky and all that. He's also three years older, and his legs don't have the same bounce that they had in his prime. So all that movement may suddenly come to an abrupt halt in the middle rounds, and the two rivals will go to war.

Look for a few knockdowns in this one. Neither is a stranger to the mat. Corrales probably because he has often encountered balance issues. Casamayor because his chin is suspect.

Will it be comparable to Corrales' 2005 classic with Jose Luis Castillo? No. But it will be a good one. Lots of action. Lots of drama. Lots of emotion. In the end, Corrales is the better fighter. And, after sitting out a year, he may be the fresher fighter as well. Go with "Chico." But don't bet a lot.