

A New Low: Butterbean At 417

Written by Michael Woods
Thursday, 08 March 2007 19:00

I cut my teeth on the Massachusetts boxing scene from 1994-1999, and the quality of matchmaking there wasn't always exemplary.

But I don't recall a match being made in my time there that looked more dreadful, on paper, than the Ultra-mega-heavyweight bout pitting Eric "Butterbean" Esch against Joe Siciliano, due to take place on Friday evening at the Palladium in Worcester, Mass.

Esch weighed in at a disgraceful 417 pounds for the bout, and the 40-year-old looks like the picture of fitness compared to his foe, who works full-time as a narcotics detective in a local suburb. Siciliano, age 49, weighed in at 313 bills, and that blubber isn't distributed over a lanky frame--the fighter looks to be about 5-10 or so. By the way, in case you stopped to reread that last paragraph, yes, I wrote "49." Siciliano was born in 1957, not that there's anything wrong with that, as I try hard not to engage in "ageism." But we can all agree that a man's athletic prowess tends to lessen as he reaches his late 20s. And Siciliano? He looks like he's been getting diet tips from "Lost's" Hurley. Butterbean comes in with a 76-7-4 (57 knockouts) record. He's being paid \$20,000 for his first Massachusetts gig, according to the Worcester Telegram and Gazette. Siciliano has a 4-3-0, (2 KOs) ledger. He's making \$4,000, the T and G says. The Fighting Detective should get an extra grand for this laughable comment he made to the paper. "It's going to be a tough fight," Siciliano said. "Not only is he strong and powerful, he's in great shape." Whaaaat? Great shape for whale! I mean, not to demean the Bean, but he is beyond portly. He looks to be dangerously obese... The question is: what in God's name is the Massachusetts Commission doing in sanctioning this bout? This sport fights off criticism on a daily basis, and is fending off a charge from MMA to remain relevant. The powers that be, who are in a position to regulate the sport, shouldn't be giving ammo to the opposition. I'm assuming that Bean, who has proved himself to be an athlete, despite his troubling BIM, since he turned pro in 1994, has passed the medical exams stipulated by the commission. Presumably, his blood pressure OK. And the same, presumably, goes for Sicilano... But if these guys are passing the physicals, then perhaps the standards aren't stringent enough. If I had a child, I wouldn't bring the kid to this bout, for fear that he'd see Siciliano crumple to the canvas after having a coronary explosion thirty seconds into the first round. "He (Siciliano) comes to fight, from what I've been told," Butterbean said to the Worcester paper. "That what makes an exciting fight — when two guys come to fight." He probably will come to fight, until he gets severely winded, and then he'll hit the deck like one of the perps that he busts on his day job. And the poor saps he got suckered into paying money to see this sideshow silliness? They'll likely grumble to themselves that they got ripped off. And thus, boxing loses another couple hundred fans who will instead give MMA, a comparative bastion of righteous standards and practices a closer look.

My last bit of advice and I'll get off the soapbox. I do hope the EMTs on hand in Worcester are well acquainted in resuscitation techniques, and have a heavy-duty defibrillator on hand. I'm not even joking—I fear that someone could have a heart attack in the ring on Friday.