

Vitali Now Running For Heavyweight Champion

Written by David A. Avila

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It was back in 2005 that WBC heavyweight titleholder Vitali Klitschko, now WBC's new fangled champion emeritus, called it quits in the boxing ring and said yes to the political ring when he ran for mayor of Kiev.

Boxing was a thing of the past, he claimed vigorously to Ukrainians voting.

Now he's back.

Klitschko has returned and wants his old title back that Nigeria's Samuel Peter now owns. They'll settle it with their fists at the O2 Arena in Berlin, Germany on Saturday Oct. 11. The fight will be televised by Showtime in conjunction with the Antonio Tarver and Chad Dawson light heavyweight title fight.

The eldest brother returns to the dream of conquering one half of the major heavyweight titles to create a tandem of domination with his younger brother Wladimir Klitschko who has the IBF and WBO heavyweight titles.

If they can't conquer Ukrainian politics, they'll conquer the world I guess.

Big brother Klitschko doesn't have the polished boxing skills of baby brother. But he has a great chin, good stamina and fights much more aggressively.

The last time he fought in the ring he took on Britain's Danny Williams in Las Vegas. Nobody knew then it would be his last appearance for almost four years. That night he knocked out Williams.

Like a lost child Klitschko has finally returned to his comfort zone where perhaps the feel of leather boxing gloves around his fists give him a sigh of relief after attempting to enter the arena of dirty politics.

But can he return to his former self?

"I don't need to warm up for fights," said Klitschko (35-2, 34 KOs) who endured operations to his legs. "Last year I wanted to fight (Jameel) McCline."

While Klitschko was politicking in the Ukraine, Peter was slowly improving from a simple brawler to a more polished pro boxer. Especially after colliding with the ultra skillful James "Lights Out" Toney.

When Toney and Peter met in the Staples Center in Los Angeles in 2006, the mauling and bruising style the Nigerian had used successfully was ineffective against the head moving and counter-punching tactics of the much smaller man. That fight ended in what seemed a draw at

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worse, but ended in a win for Peter. Many felt Toney won the fight.

Peter learned a valuable lesson that night and worked diligently improving his own defense and offense, especially the jab.

In Peter's next match with Toney, he displayed a decent jab that peppered the out-of-shape Toney and gave him a clear unanimous decision over the clever boxer.

"He boxed twice one of the greatest boxers of the past 25 years James Toney," said Stacey McKinley, who trains Peter. "He's not just a puncher, he can box too."

Last March, in Mexico, Peter knocked out Oleg Maskaev in frightful fashion to capture the WBC title and become the first Nigerian to win a heavyweight world title.

"My dream came true," said Peter, 28, who is seven inches shorter than Klitschko. "When I went back home everybody embraced me, the president (of Nigeria) embraced me."

The marked improvement in his boxing skills showed he had vastly improved from the swing-from-the-heels puncher who lost to Wladimir Klitschko by decision in 2005 to a more precise boxer-puncher with defense sprinkled in 2008.

Vitali Klitschko observed all of Peter's fights.

"I can't explain if Peter is better or not," said Klitschko. "I know he's a very tough fighter...that's why I studied his whole career and that's why I know everything about him."

Before Klitschko's recent sabbatical, he was considered the best heavyweight fighter though many other boxers had more technical proficiency or speed. Knockout wins over Williams, Corrie Sanders and Kirk Johnson had solidified that status.

It was a loss to Lennox Lewis in 2003 that impressed boxing fans and experts. As a last-minute substitute, Klitschko challenged then world champion Lewis and gave fans at the Staples Center six high-octane rounds of furious punching and bloody warfare that left the crowd breathless. A horrible gash above his eyes forced the ringside doctor to halt the fight and go to the scorecards. Lewis barely held on to the title and would never fight the Ukrainian again.

Klitschko won over boxing fans the world over with his bravery and guts.

Eventually he was given another chance for a world title when Lewis retired and knocked out Sanders at the Staples Center to grab it. He only defended it once before injuries crippled him for a year forcing him to retire.

Klitschko unretires

After Peter knocked out Maskaev to win the WBC world title in Cancun, Mexico it was announced that Klitschko would be reinstated as the number one contender, though he had not

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fought in over three years.

“I didn’t lose my title in a fight. I gave up my title three years ago,” explains Klitschko ever the diplomat. “But now I want my title back. I’m healthy right now.”

During the last two years rumors had emanated from Germany, where the Klitschkos both spend much of their time, that the elder brother was back in the gym looking for the right moment and proper opponent to make it official.

Though the younger Klitschko, who is trained by Emanuel Steward, is considered the superior boxer technique-wise, the elder brother is seen as the gutsier fighter and more powerful puncher.

Peter doesn’t think so.

“They fight like they’re robots,” says Peter who knocked down Wladimir Klitschko three times but still lost by decision after tiring while chasing a knockout victory. “I beat his brother but I gave him the fight...I’ll prove myself again.”

Vitali Klitschko is a former kickboxing world champion and still has a few remnants of that martial art style that make him appear to be crude. But few question his zeal for combat.

“This is going to be a tremendous war,” said Lou Duva who promotes Peter. “Vitali Klitschko is an excellent fighter.”

Peter scoffs at Klitschko’s qualifications.

“Next time you want to win an election you come see me,” said Peter to Klitschko during a conference call.