

More Goofiness From The WBA

Written by Ron Borges

Tuesday, 02 June 2009 19:00

If John Ruiz moved as quickly in the ring as he moves into a legal battle he'd be Muhammad Ali. If Ruslan Chagaev could avoid punches as easily as he avoids Nikolai Valuev he'd be Willie Pep. And if frogs had wings they wouldn't bump their ass. Such is the state of the WBA heavyweight title that the frog's situation is far interesting than any of the above named heavyweight boxers.

Last weekend Chagaev, the WBA's "champion in recess (would that he were their champion in solitary confinement)" was supposed to end his recess and face Valuev in Finland in a rematch that had already twice been postponed because of Chagaev's medical problems. The fact that a heavyweight title fight was being staged in Finland between two Russians promoted by two Germans and one Floridian (citizen of the world Don King) says all one needs to know about the interest in this but the WBA insisted it be done and all seemed set until Valuev refused to fight a guy who has twice tested positive for hepatitis B.

Can you blame him?

The Finns, at least according to Chagaev's promoters, said they'd allow the fight to go on if Valuev agreed to be inoculated. Valuev, being smarter than he looks, figured if his opponent had something from which he needed to be inoculated he'd pass. And so the mess the WBA has made of their portion of a title that now barely exists in the public's mind continues.

Valuev, who is the WBA champion not in recess, is sick and tired of scheduling fights with Chagaev only to see one medical condition after another cause him to postpone the fight. Since winning the title from Valuev in controversial (naturally!) fashion 25 months ago, Chagaev has come up lame literally (Achilles) once and figuratively twice (hep B problems) when Valuev was his opponent but somehow managed to get by the authorities to fight optional defenses against two non-entities. How can this be?

That's what King and Wilfried Sauerland, Valuev's promoters, want to know. They are demanding the WBA declare Valuev the champion and move on. Unfortunately, if they do that, it means Ruiz will fight his 12th WBA title fight this decade because the fools on their rating committee made him the mandatory challenger to the Valuev-Chagaev winner after some shady dealings went on during Ruiz's split decision loss to Valuev last Aug. 30 in Berlin for the interim belt.

Hovering on the edge of all this is Evander Holyfield, leaning on a cane and demanding another shot at Valuev himself. Why he feels entitled to another title shot is beyond comprehension but then again you look at Larry, Moe and Curly (also known as Chagaev, Valuev and Ruiz) and you can see his point.

Ruiz's camp argues that Chagaev hasn't defended the WBA title since Aug. 30, 2008 and has failed to be available for the mandatory rematch with Valuev for more than two years. Hence,

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they want him stripped, which frankly doesn't sound like a bad idea.

The bad idea part comes when one realizes it would mean a third Ruiz-Valuev wrestling match. Trilogies in boxing are usually wonderful things because they produce nights like the Thrilla in Manila. All Ruiz-Valuev III figures to produce is another Bore in Berlin or Stinker in Stuttgart.

We're not talking Gatti-Ward here. We're talking Grabbing-Wheezing here. If Ruiz (43-8-1, 29 KOs) lands a third shot at Valuev (50-1, 34 KO) he will have fought for some form of the WBA title or in a title eliminator in 14 of his last 15 fights. The guy has been in more heavyweight title fights than George Foreman or Joe Frazier! Why? Beats me, and I like the guy.

Of course, Chagaev's handlers do not intend to sit idly by while their man sits idly by. They are already threatening a lawsuit claiming Chagaev doesn't have hepatitis B, only something that can give you hepatitis B.

Universum Box-Promotions has given what it claims is medical proof to the WBA that Chagaev only carries the antigen for hepatitis B, not hepatitis B itself. They claim his blood is clean but don't deny the Finns thought it cloudy enough to ask Valuev to be inoculated against whatever he's carrying.

In a statement, Universum claimed, "(it) also provided the WBA with evidence that Ruslan Chagaev's blood values are unchanged for many years and are safe. They are invariably below the international standard from which the hepatitis disease is considered infectious. Ruslan Chagaev's current blood values also correspond to those which he had in the first fight against Nikolai Valuev in April 2007. The fight at that time was promoted by Sauerland Event under the supervision of the Austrian Federation in Stuttgart and if there was any doubt about these blood values, it would have been mentioned then. Therefore, like the first time, there is no reason to call off the fight.

"The Finnish Federation explained in [Saturday's] hearing that they have not prohibited the fight, but wanted Nikolai Valuev to agree to a passive protective inoculation [immunglobuline] within 24 hours of the fight. A decision from Valuev was not communicated. Against this background, Universum Box-Promotion reserves the right to take legal steps."

Naturally, Chagaev's doctor says he's healthy as a horse and is not infectious. Neither Dr. Michael Ehnert nor anyone for Universum explained why the only country that has allowed him to fight since first testing positive for hepatitis B in 2006 is Germany-- where his promoter and Valuev's rule the roost.

This is what heavyweight boxing has become – fights between champions in recess, out of recess, in the doctor's office, out of the doctor's office, in the rankings, out of the rankings and in all cases not on the radar screen of most fans of boxing, sport or soap operas.

In the last two years, Valuev has lost a majority decision to Chagaev and won a majority decision from Holyfield and a split decision from Ruiz. He has done nothing to distinguish himself but somehow is a world "champion."

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Chagaev has won a split decision from Ruiz, and a majority decision from Valuev. He also went the distance with England's Matt Skelton which, frankly, should be considered a loss just because he went the distance with such a pedestrian opponent. He has done nothing to distinguish himself yet is considered a champion in recess... but not in a far enough recess to suit me.

As for Ruiz, he's 7-5-1-1 in his last 14 fights, 12 of them title fights and two of them title eliminators. He has lost to James Toney, Roy Jones, Valuev, Chagaev and the spy who came in from the cold. He has done little to distinguish himself since he beat up Hasim Rahman six years ago.

If these are the best three heavyweights in the world in the opinion of the WBA's rating committee it should change its name to the World Banal Association. If there is a point to this endless exercise, beyond destroying heavyweight boxing for all time, someone please inform us because had Dana White, the bombastic head of UFC's mixed martial arts organization, set out to destroy heavyweight boxing he couldn't have done a better job of it than these guys are doing right now.

In light of all this, the WBA said they'd announce their next move in a week unless, of course, they take a recess. We can only hope.