There are those who to this day insist that future heavyweight champion Joe Frazier, upon returning from his gold-medal-winning performance at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, was greeted at Philadelphia International Airport by … no one.

No brass band. No television cameras. No tape recorder- and notebook-wielding reporters. No throngs of well-wishing fans.

So reportedly frustrated was Smokin' Joe by the lack of hoopla over his signal accomplishment that he temporarily went back to his job at a local slaughterhouse, convinced he was through with boxing and boxing was through with him. But then a group of area businessmen formed an alliance called Cloverlay to financially back Frazier's early professional career in the belief that, hey, maybe the young slugger with the sledgehammer left hook just might make a go of it in the ring.

It's a funny thing about Philadelphia, which long has prided itself as being America's premier fight town, the place where great champions are forged at a per-capita rate that exceeds any other municipality. At one point in the 1970s, four of the world's top 10 middleweights all resided within Philly's city limits. Another was world-rated at junior middleweight. What would be the odds of that happening now? Ten thousand to one? Higher?

But while Philadelphia boxing gold medalists Meldrick Taylor and Tyrell Biggs were honored with a parade in their hometown following their successes at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, the route was only eight blocks long and was observed mostly by curious lunchtime passers-by. When longtime Philly icon Bernard Hopkins became the first man to knock out Oscar De La Hoya, on Sept. 18, 2004, the parade hastily organized to celebrate "The Executioner's" feat drew perhaps 10,000 enthusiastic fans, a nice turnout but far less than the seven-figure mob that packed Center City after the 2008 Phillies ended 25 years of civic frustration in the major team sports by knocking off the Tampa Bay Rays in five games in the World Series.

And if you think that was lovefest was as good as it possibly can get for a Philly franchise, wait to you see how huge the outpouring of affection will be if and when those perennial playoff bridesmaids, the Eagles, ever win a Super Bowl.

So maybe the welcoming committee for heavyweight Eddie Chambers upon his arrival from Germany, where he had pulled a Fourth of July upset of unbeaten Ukrainian Alexander "Sascha" Dimitrenko, wasn't as extensive as it had been for Taylor and Biggs. Comprised of Denise Murray, wife of Chambers' manager-trainer, Rob Murray Sr., and a reporter for the *Phil adelphia Daily New s*, it was at least as much as the turnout for Frazier 45 years earlier.

“Who’s that?” one departing passenger inquired as the reporter interviewed Chambers.

“Must be some kind of a celebrity,” another responded.

Must be. But know this: should the transplanted Chambers, 27, who moved cross-state from Pittsburgh to Philly in 2002 to advance his boxing career, return from his likely next trip across the Atlantic Ocean on a similar winning note, it’s a virtual certainty his reception at the airport will be bigger and warmer.

The heavyweight championship of the world might not carry the cachet it once did, but tradition dictates that it still rates a reasonable amount of TV face time and an opportunity for any new claimant to satisfy the curiosity of previously disinterested media inquisitors.

To Rob Murray Sr.’s way of thinking, Chambers’ 12-round, majority decision over Dimitrenko in a WBO heavyweight eliminator is merely the precursor to an even more shocking upset, the one in which the undersized “Fast Eddie” flummoxes another Ukrainian giant widely regarded as the best big man in boxing,WBO/IBF heavyweight titlist Wladimir Klitschko, with his quick hands and middleweight’s mobility. Klitschko, who also regularly fights in Germany, would be a significant favorite over Chambers (35-1, 18 KOs), but then so was Dimitrenko (29-1, 19 KOs).

“Eddie showed everybody how to beat a big guy,” Murray said after Chambers, just 6-1 and a trim 208¼ pounds, the lightest he’s been since he scaled in at 207 for a 2003 bout with Allen Smith, systematically chopped down Dimitrenko, who at 6-7 and 253½ towered above him as might an NBA power forward posting up a point guard.

“We are No. 1 in the world, not just the United States, and, yes, I’m including the Klitschkos (the WBC heavyweight champ is Wladimir’s older brother, Vitali). Eddie Chambers is the best heavyweight in the world. Absolutely he is the best heavyweight in the United States. I don’t think there’s any question about that.”

Supporters of Cristobal Arreola, the 6-4, 255-pound big banger from Riverside, Calif. – who, incidentally, is promoted by Goossen Tutor, as is Chambers – might dispute Murray’s claims as to the identity of the current main man in U.S. heavyweight boxing. Certainly, those who regard the Klitschkos as superior beings far above the shallow talent pool of American wannabes aren’t buying what Murray is selling. But Murray always has had a keen eye for talent, and Chambers’ rise to his present level of prominence is exactly what he envisioned in 2002, when, acting on a tip from a friend, he checked out the pudgy kid with the rapid-firecombinations.

Who knew that Chambers’ eight-round, unanimous decision over David Chappell – no, not the smart-alecky comedian – in Pittsburgh on April 26, 2002, would provide Murray with a glimpse into a crystal ball whose blurry images only now coming into sharper focus.

“I thought Eddie had a lot of potential,” said Murray, who was then better known as the host of a weekly boxing show on a Philadelphia black radio station. “It just needed to be developed.”

Toward that end, Murray convinced Chambers and his father, Eddie Sr., to relocate to

Philadelphia, where the fight scene is busier and the sparring would be more intense. It doesn't take long for the pretenders to be separated from the possible contenders in those legendary Philly gym wars. Thus began Chambers' extended apprenticeship at the Blue Horizon, the musty sweat shop on North Broad Street where any number of Philadelphia's more prominent practicioners of the pugilistic arts have refined their craft. His first of 18 appearances there, on May 24, 2002, was a rematch with Chappell, whom Chambers again dispatched on a unanimous, six-round decision to boost his record to 9-0.

Chambers didn't move up to main-event status until April 25, 2003, when, only 21 and in his fifth bout at the Blue Horizon, he stopped journeyman CraigTomlinson in four rounds. Murray – who picked up tricks of the trainer's trade from such legendary Philadelphia cornermen as Yank Durham and Sam Solomon, and used that knowledge to great advantage in his associations with Steve Little and Will "Stretch" Taylor – was serving only as the manager then, with Chambers' father continuing to serve as chief second.

The quality of Chambers' opposition increased incrementally, from Sam Tillman, Cornelius Ellis and Marcus Rhode to Melvin Foster, Ross Puritty and Ed Mahone to Dominick Guinn and Derric Rossy. Chambers' first fight for Goossen Tutor came on May 4, 2007, a unanimous, 10-round decision over onetime contender Dominick Guinn at the Palms in Las Vegas. He followed that with a split decision over 2000 U.S. Olympian Calvin Brock in Tacoma, Wash., earning him a date in an IBF heavyweight eliminator against massive Russian Alexander Povetkin in Berlin. But, after a promising beginning, Chambers tailed off in the middle and later rounds and lost a unanimous, 12-round decision.

That who had already written off Chambers as too small, too light and too underpowered to make much headway in a heavyweight division dominated by enormous Eastern Europeans considered his loss to Povetkin as indisputable proof that their skepticism had been justified. But you know what they say: sometimes you have to take a step backward before you can take two forward. Eddie Chambers Sr. was replaced as his son's lead trainer after the Povetkin debacle, Murray assuming the dual duties of manager and trainer. "Eddie was prepared for a fight, but not *the* fight," Murray said of his charge's curious failure to recognize that not all bouts are or should be considered equal.

The tweaking of Eddie Chambers continues. He is now 5-0 on the comeback trail since Povetkin, including what surely what was his farewell to the Blue Horizon, a fifth-round stoppage of Livan Castillo on Oct. 3, 2008. Upon the conclusion of that valedictory, someone should have given him some kind of diploma to commemorate the occasion.

Although Chambers was 223 pounds – the second-highest of his career -- for his previous bout, a 10-round majority decision over former WBC heavyweight champion Samuel Peter, he and Murray concluded that being bigger and stronger doesn't necessarily mean better.

"The extra weight just made me slower," Chambers said after he turned Dimitrenko into an oversized heavy bag. "After the Peter fight, I took off 10 pounds in a week and a half. It came off easy. I vowed that I'd never get up over 215 again, even between fights.

"Keeping my weight down will help me stay effective. I was sharper. I was faster. My movement was much better. I didn't have a jiggly midsection. It makes all the difference. I was able to get on my toes and stay on my toes. I had more energy throughout the fight. I like the way my new body feels. I like the way it looks, too."

If Dimitrenko was expecting to see the Chambers who fought at the same leisurely pace he did against Povetkin, he had to be sorely disappointed. Chambers officially was credited with two knockdowns. On the first, referee Geno Rodriguez gave Dimitrekno a standing eight-count in the seventh round when Dimitrenko doubled over in pain from a left hook to the body. The Ukrainian claimed his distress was the result of a low blow, but Rodriguez ruled the punch was legal.

Then, in the 10th round, Chambers sent Dimitrenko crashing to the canvas, dislodging his mouthpiece in the process, with a hook to the jaw.

The decision for Chambers should have been a given, but British judge Paul Thomas, ignoring the obvious, submitted a scorecard that read 113-113. His colleagues, GlennFeldman and Fernando Laguna, ensured that justice was done by turning in cards that had Chambers rolling by margins of 117-109 and 116-111, respectively.

"I don't speak German, but I knew something was wrong when people started booing," Chambers said of the audience reaction when Thomas' score was announced. "After the sixth or seventh round, I had won over the crowd. When the people booed, I knew something bad had happened. I have to say, I was worried."

Ironically, Chambers was hooted by the pro-Dimitrenko turnout as he made his way to the ring at Hamburg's Color Line Arena. That he swayed so many spectators made for a scene right out of 1985's *Rocky IV*.

"All that was missing were Sylvester Stallone and an American flag to drape around my shoulders," Chambers said. "Sascha even looks a little like Dolph Lundgren (who played Ivan Drago in *Rocky IV*)."

So, again, is Chambers a rugged enough runt to whittle down the 6-6¾, 245-pound Wladimir Klitschko? If you believe that mystery guest must be possessed of one-punch putaway power, probably not. When Chambers wins inside the distance, it's usually the result of accumulated damage.

"For Klitschko, I'll have fight plans ready to counter two people – Klitschko and Emanuel Steward (Klitschko's Hall of Fame trainer)," Murray said, the wheels already whirling inside his mind. "Look, I know what some people have said about Eddie, are still saying about him. He's just a Blue Horizon fighter, a club fighter. He's supposedly too short, too light, can't punch. Hey, a lot of people said some of the same things about Jack Johnson, Joe Louis, Rocky Marciano, Jack Dempsey. They weren't real big guys, but they could fight. This kid can fight."

And if Chambers can do more giant-slaying while remaining taut and trim, the benefits could

extend even beyond a bejeweled championship belt.

“No more `Fat Eddie,’” he said. “I’m `Fast Eddie’ again, and I’m going to stay that way. Who knows? Maybe I can get an underwear commercial out of this.”