A LAND OF COMMON SENSE - Showtime and multiple promotional entities unveiled their already much appreciated outline of what could be another bolstering boost for the industry when the "Super Six World Boxing Classic" was formally announced Monday. The six participants introduced comprise a strong enough field to legitimize the format's mission of establishing an undisputed 168 pound division kingpin.

The six-pack of primo performers, three from the US and three from Europe, almost guarantees most of the fights will be very interesting. Over the approximately two year punching project, audiences can get further HD insight into each personality in what immediately seems like the best scenario in the history of the division.

Only Carl Froch and Jermain Taylor have faced others in the draw, when Froch rallied to a come from behind final round stoppage over Taylor for the WBC title. Other than that, it's uncharted territory at the top of the hill for everyone involved.

The point system used to determine a fighter's relative position gives 2 points for a win (with an extra point for knockouts), and 1 point for a draw.

If the tournament goes safety first and develops into cases of fighters going for sure points and fighting "not to lose,"the odds of more than a couple draws happening over the projected span of a definitive dozen duke outs are around 50-50. A common philosophy of going for the knockout seems more likely at the start.

While there are always surprises possible, here's the call on what to expect through the series' conclusion, currently scheduled to wrap up around May of 2011.

One fighter will have to be replaced before the tournament's second stage begins. One decision will be controversial enough to prompt a serious review and possibly mandated rematch.

But let's not spoil any surprises. We'll proceed as the tournament is currently laid out. Recent personal predictions put this in the "every blind hog gets an ear of corn sometime" sweepstakes.

Each entrant will be lined up to meet three different opponents over "Group Stages". After those preliminary nine lives have been cataloged, the fistic final four with the most points go on, which leads us to yet unspecified bracketology for the entire tournament, with final match ups to be determined by previous tournament fight results.

The series kicks off on October 10 in a twin-site broadcast, opening with 2004 US Olympic bronze medalist Andre Dirrell, 18-0 (13) meeting hometown hero Froch, 25-0 (20) in his backyard of Manchester, UK. That kickoff will be followed by Arthur Abraham's home court clash with Taylor, set for a new O2 Arena on the outer fringes of Berlin.

Defending WBC titlist Froch will be faced with a considerable task in how well can get through Dirrell's southpaw stance, and won't solve the puzzle until it's too late. Dirrell will present him with enough angles to nullify Froch's aggression. Dirrell should be able to slickly stick his way to a controversial decision. Froch will press all the action and mount a rally down the stretch but Dirrell will render most of the assault ineffective, and hang on for a close, perhaps split-decision win.

The tourney's first big surprise comes when Taylor, 28-3-1 (17), shocks Abraham in a toe to toe whapathon that should spell a win for the visitor but results in Taylor having to settle for a draw. Taylor charges out, more psyched up to be fighting in Germany than in Arkansas, and almost stops Abraham before three rounds are completed, in one-sided action that might have been halted elsewhere. Abraham, 30-0 (24) will rally and get Taylor in serious trouble, but Taylor will look bigger and stronger overall. Scoring will be too questionable to grant Taylor the deserved upset, but Abraham, who gave up his IBF 160 lb laurels prior to participating, will no longer be one of the tournament favorites.

The remaining first round fight is set to commence on November 7th as WBA kingpin and a pre-tournament favorite Mikkel Kessler, 41-1 (31) defends against '04 Olympic gold medalist Andre Ward, 19-0 (12) in Ward's Oakland stomping grounds. At 25, Ward is the youngest competitor in the tournament, but his Olympic experience alone takes care of that. Ward heard criticism that he was overly cautious and took too long to dispose of a faded Edison Miranda, but since that win helped him here, you can't question his results.

That approach works like a dream for Ward against the touted Kessler, who may have let rust settle in after his disappointment against Joe Calzaghe. Ward will play the unwilling warrior and pick a few moments to score points, while Kessler sleepwalks just enough to let a probable victory slip away.

At the end of the first round grouping the scores will be:
Dirrell and Ward 2
Taylor and Abraham 1
Froch and Kessler 0

The initial 2010 Group Stage should see Abraham versus Dirrell at a US location in January. Abraham, embarrassed by the near debacle against Taylor, rebounds by showing up in a career best form and steamrolls Dirrell around the ring. Dirrell manages to flop his way to safety enough to make the final bell in a sloppy but entertaining scrap. Except for a couple early frames where Abraham is too reckless trying to start faster, it's pretty much a shutout for the German visitor.

For Froch's and Kessler's subsequent date, probably March somewhere in Europe, Denmark may host since word is UK television funding is at a minimal stage lately. That could also mean one of the fight friendly flagships of German TV will broadcast another big fight in Deutschland. Location becomes a footnote formality as Kessler and Froch, both smarting from earlier detours, will engage in what becomes the series' first true classic.

Kessler weathers an early storm after they trade splattering knockdowns and comes back to leave Froch collapsed and drooling on the strands. The fight last less than six rounds. Both men are barely conscious of who and where they are after the fight.

Not too long into springtime after that, Taylor and Ward meet stateside for what becomes a sloppy slog in hugland. Ward abandons any offense as Taylor presses the action just enough to take an unpopular decision as both fighters look confused and unmotivated.

Scoring after second Group Stages:

Abraham, Kessler and Taylor 3
Dirrell and Ward 2
Froch 0

The summer session/third Group Stage unfolds like this:

Ward - Dirrell is a chess match with pillows and by far the most lackluster fight of the tournament until the final few rounds. Both men wake up and create highlight reel exchanges, but Ward pocketed every point in the first half of the contest and has a lead he does not relinquish, despite Dirrell emerging as a go-for-broke brawler, who ironically ends up a fan favorite.

Froch has the summertime blues against Abraham at a European venue, once again probably near Abraham's TV dollar driveway. Faithful fans pack the building and this is the kind of fight "King Arthur" likes, with a willing foe that's right in front of him. Froch knows he only has one chance and tries to take a shootout. He lands some clean shots early that might have done something on another night in another place, but tonight Abraham is a tank and rolls over Froch before the 9th.

Back on American shores, Kessler meets Taylor in a battle of current leaders. Taylor looks ready when he starts on his toes and leads early behind the jab, but slowly and surely Kessler just grinds Taylor up in a fight that starts wild then slows down when Taylor runs out of gas by the 10th. It's all Taylor can do to last the distance and deny Kessler a crucial KO point.

So, after the completed primary slugging sessions are concluded, the point stand is at:

Abraham 6
Kessler 5
Ward 4
Taylor 3

which eliminates Dirrell with 2 points and Froch with 0.

This will lead to January 2011, a new duking decade (with boxing still alive and well, big surprise) and a pair of opening group rematches in which familiarity breeds concussive contempt.

Abraham is the only man among three other starters to remain undefeated, but most observers feel that slate should be different after the first fight with Taylor. Now, Abraham tries to make a justifying statement, and this time it's Taylor who's in deep trouble early in their second fight. For six rounds it looks like Abraham is close to a knockout, but Taylor seems to grow before the eyes of the crowd and what first seemed like glancing gloves start to land hard and straight on Abraham's kisser. Abraham suddenly looks vulnerable and Taylor pounces with a fabulous five punch flurry that leaves Abraham defenseless for a stunning TKO in the 11th.

Kessler and Ward meet a weekend later, with the opposite type result as both play it safe while the crowd boos. Ward stays on his toes and Kessler tries to follow suit. Kessler can't land many punches, while Ward doesn't throw many that are more than defensive jabs. Ward boxes well enough to build a slim lead on the scorecards initially, but his lack of offense costs him as Kessler keeps marching forward without cutting off the ring and squeaks by to earn an uninspired split-decision by one point.

Which brings us to our championship, sometime in the summer of '11. It's going to be Jermain Taylor against Mikkel Kessler in a surprising, anyone's fight type thriller that becomes a fan favorite and cements the tournament's appeal. The location is not NY or Vegas but Copenhagen, which lights up for the event.

Both teams form a strategy based on waiting the other guy out. Both training camps spend months practicing well conditioned pacing that should get them ready to remain fresh, unscarred, and set to fire away and capture the crown during the anticipated final three rounds, or roughly the closing nine minutes of the tournament.

Instead, each man gets his bell rung immediately in the opening exchange and abandons those plans. There are frequent clinches, but action is back, forth, and furious. Taylor jumps ahead but Kessler catches up. The defining difference occurs around the tenth frame while they're wrestling against the ropes, when a knockdown is ruled against Taylor that looks to many like a slip.

That point is crucial as Kessler captures the 168 pound title with a dramatic split decision that has global fans asking for more, even if it means putting the championship on hold for another round robin.

Time flies when you're having fun.