Written by Ron Borges Thursday, 23 July 2009 19:00

If nothing else, David Haye has better moves than the Klitschko brothers. At least outside the ring he does.

With the latest news that Haye has now left both WBC champion Vitali Klitschko and IBF-WBO champion Wladimir Klitschko at the fistic altar in barely two months, one has to give him his props. We have no idea whether he can actually beat these guys if he ever gets in the ring with them but he surely knows how to beat them at the negotiating table. He simply leaves.

Haye's latest victim was big brother Vitali, who Klitschko's manager claimed weeks ago had reached an agreement to fight Haye Sept. 12 at 55,000-seat Commerzbank Arena in Frankfurt, Germany. This came only weeks after Haye had pulled out of a scheduled June 20 fight against Wladimir three weeks before the scheduled encounter, insisting he had suffered a back injury.

Many questioned the validity of that injury, claiming Haye's real pain came when he first learned the British cable television company responsible for paying his entire purse was facing bankruptcy. "Oh, my aching back," Haye was supposedly heard to exclaim when he got word that Setanta might go under.

Soon after Haye came up lame and not all that much later Setanta went broke. This made his back injury fortuitous on two counts – he avoided taking a beating at the bank and possibly taking one from Wladimir Klitschko.

While the younger Klitschko made other plans (eventually slapping around Ruslan Chagaev until the referee grew bored enough to say "Enough!") Haye and his manager, Adam Booth, embarked on an effort to engage Vitali in negotiations for a September title fight to the point where Bernd Boente (who manages the brothers Klitschko) and HBO executives thought they had a deal with Haye.

Maybe they did but what they didn't have was a signed deal which in boxing, of all places, means you don't have anything at all. Despite Booth's constant dawdling about having Haye endorse the contract, Boente and the Klitschko's co-manager, Shelly Finkel, kept insisting the deal was done. It was done all right. Done as in finished.

Why? Because in the interim Haye and Booth found a better deal elsewhere and they quietly took it.

All of a sudden Boente, Finkel and HBO executives couldn't get a call returned, or an e-mail replied to, or a Tweet Twitted. They couldn't reach Booth by phone or mail or text or even on his Facebook account. Eventually this became a clue to them that something was amiss.

It was. Have was amiss. Or more precisely a signed contract from Have was a missing.

Rule 1 In Boxing: Handshakes Are Great, But Get A Signature To Be Sure

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Where he ended up instead was in a fight with WBA champion Nikolai Valuev on Nov. 7, a fight which, frankly, the 6-3, 215-pound Haye would seem far more likely to win than against either of the Klitschkos. This is not to say he couldn't beat one or both of them because he has the power to knock out anyone if he can land one of his bombs before his fragile chin is itself tested and found wanting. But if someone gives you the choice of fighting for Valuev's share of the heavyweight title or for those under the Klitschko's control you would be wise to opt for the former and worry about them later.

When Boente finally learned of this Wednesday, he was irate. Finkel was irate. HBO was irate. What the brothers Klitschko had to say is verboten on a family website but they were somewhat more than irate. As for Haye? Hasta la vista, baby.

Haye, who must have been studying some old Floyd Mayweather, Jr. negotiating strategies, said he could never sign a "slave" contract like the one Klitschko was offering. He said he hadn't liked the one he first signed either but did it to get his shot.

Injury or fear of bankruptcy court intervened to prevent that first fight. German promoter Wilfried Sauerland's money prevented the second one. So instead of facing either of them the former cruiserweight champion has decided to take his chances against Valuev, fully knowing that if he wins it only enhances his negotiating position with the Klitschkos for a unification fight down the road.

Boente, whose negotiating style has been considerably less than kind to some of the Klitschko brothers' other potential challengers, declared Booth "...has no idea what he is doing!"

Actually, it looks from here like he knew exactly what he was doing. He was securing the best deal with the least risk for his fighter. Why face Klitschko as a challenger if you can get a shot at a portion of the fractured heavyweight title against a lesser opponent for comparable money and then come back to them later on more equal negotiating footing?

Haye (22-1, 21 KO) will certainly have a large problem in front of him when he gets into the ring with the 7-foot, 320-pound Valuev, who is the tallest and heaviest heavyweight champion in history. But he knows that's where Valuev will be all night – right in front of him and not likely to be throwing much back beyond a sometimes stiff jab.

Haye's far superior hand speed and athleticism figure to give Valuev fits and if he can avoid that long but ponderous jab he will be well on his way to winning the WBA version of the heavyweight title with a lot less difficulty than he would have had to combat against either of the Klitschko brothers.

It is understandable why they and their handlers are upset but the fact is they never had a signed contract from him to fight for the WBC title and so they had nothing more than his promoter's word. In boxing that's often not worth much but if David Haye wins the WBA title on Nov. 7 he'll be worth a lot more than he was when this all started, whether the Klitschkos like it or not.