

Respect Now, War Later For Klitschko & Arreola

Written by David A. Avila

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LOS ANGELES-As the two gargantuan heavyweights Vitali “Dr. Ironfist” Klitschko and Chris “The Nightmare” Arreola glared at each other with menacing intent on Thursday, that was all the violence and verbiage that would be seen. At least today.

“I’m not going to do any trash talking,” said Arreola (27-0, 24 KOs). “I respect the man. I’m going to do my talking in the ring.”

After almost a year of talk and rumors the two massive prizefighters will do more than stare on Sept. 26 at the Staples Center in Los Angeles when WBC titleholder Klitschko defends his championship claim against upstart American contender Arreola.

Klitschko sat somewhat surprised at the respect and calmness displayed by his future opponent. Before the press conference he playfully walked behind an unaware Arreola and massaged his shoulders and shook his hand.

Both fighters displayed class and respect toward each other. They know that it will be much different in seven weeks.

“Chris Arreola comes to fight,” said Klitschko (37-2, 36 KOs), adding that he knows the tradition of Mexican fighters as aggressive come-forward antagonists. “He’s not like the other fighters. He will be my greatest challenge.”

Klitschko arrived in a smart gray sports coat and white collared shirt, while Arreola embraced hip-hop attire as a black baseball hat with an “LA” emblem was placed on his head and he wore a black t-shirt and dark colored coat.

It’s America versus Europe, youth versus experience and power versus power. Between both fighters only six of their combined 66 opponents were not counted out by a referee.

“It’s going to end in a knockout,” said Arreola.

Klitschko concurred, and then added, “I don’t know who is going to win.”

Like heavyweights from another era, neither fighter was about to feed fuel to the other with nasty comments or bloated predictions. Both expect it to be a furious and decisive ending.

The only nasty comments spoken were directed to Great Britain’s David Haye who was Klitschko’s original opponent who bailed out last month.

“I don’t think David Haye wanted to fight me or my brother,” said Klitschko, 38, whose brother Wladimir Klitschko was also supposed to fight Haye but that fight was canceled due to the British fighter getting injured. “I don’t believe it was injuries.”

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When Haye back-stepped and opted to fight Russia's Nicolai Valuev, the WBA titleholder Klitschko looked around to see who could step in.

Arreola was chosen.

"I was surprised," said Arreola, 28, who is the number one contender and was expected to fight Klitschko next year as the mandatory challenger. "I've seen a lot of his fights. The man can fight."

Klitschko had retired for almost four years following repeated injuries to his shoulder and knee. From 2004 to 2008 the older of the Klitschkos stopped training and attempted to become mayor of Kiev in the Ukraine. He was unsuccessful.

In his first return fight on October 2008 Klitschko knocked out WBC titleholder Samuel Peter in the eighth round in Berlin, Germany. Then, five months later, he stopped Cuba's Juan Carlos Gomez in nine rounds.

Arreola began his ascent to the top of the heavyweight division in 2003 and without any of the fanfare he enjoys today. It's been a slow but steady climb.

"I remember in my first fight I fought for just \$600 in front of 200 people," said Arreola who first lived in East L.A. before moving to Riverside while in high school.

Both Arreola and Klitschko expect their encounter to result in a knockout.

Arreola promises it will end in a knockout.

"We're heavyweights," Arreola said boldly. "It only takes one punch."

Dan Goossen, president of Goossen-Tutor Promotions that is co-promoting the event with K-2 Promotions, predicts a classic.

"I believe it's going to be one of the greatest fights since Mike Tyson," said Goossen.

Though both fighters expressed mutual respect, as they stood face to face for the cameras it was clear that the safety lock will be unsheathed when they enter the ring on September 26.