

## Put Up Or Shut Up; Way, Way Up

Written by Phil Woolever

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THE LINE IN THE SAND - Uh oh, David Haye has been talking big again.

That could be a bad omen for Nikolai Valuev, German fight fans, and the folks at Sauerland Event. The last couple times "The Hayemaker" started spouting his often entertaining brand of bravado the proposed clash concluded with Haye's new trademark disappearing act.

A couple weeks prior to today's press conference in Nuremberg where the Valuev-Haye contest was formally confirmed, Haye started squawking about his plans to dispose of the "big, hairy beast".

While it's usually a pick 'em situation on the odds of Haye's self-promoting commentary being either pointlessly stupid or genuinely humorous, he seemed to be in good form regarding his trash talking of Valuev, who has probably heard far more insults than he deserves both as a boxer and as a man.

Still, Haye's mock up mimicry of falling into sweaty clinches with "The Russian Giant" had more funny flair than many late night cable comedians.

Regardless of humorous content however, the more Haye talks, the more a serious question arises.

Will Haye actually show up as scheduled on November seventh at the recently announced venue, Arena Nuremberger Versicherung?

"This is truly a David versus Goliath battle," said Haye with the apt cliché that has become the fight's marketing theme. "I'm not going to say it will be easy but I know I can (finally) bring a title home."

Adding a major belt to his resume would obviously increase Haye's subsequent earning power substantially, but another cliché that applies in this situation is "seeing is believing". Promoters might want to think about making Haye put up some sort of security deposit.

Within less than a year, Haye has gone from being the poster boy for heavyweight boxing's future to more like someone on a missing person's poster. While styles and recent form indicate Valuev may be a huge target there for the taking, there's no guarantee at all Haye is indeed the man to do it.

Based on his recent form approaching tentative tilts versus Wladimir and Vitali Klitschko respectively, the odds aren't any better than 50-50 at this point around six weeks out that Haye will indeed show.

Granted, since WBA titlist Valuev is considered by almost every reasonable source to be far

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less of a threat than either consensus heavyweight king Wladimir Klitschko or his WBC belt holding older sibling Vitali, there is more incentive and less of an intimidation factor in Haye's behavior this time around.

Besides that, if mainstream London media and blogs are any indication, Haye's less than optimal professionalism has cost him fans, even on his home turf.

November the 7th looks like a gloved-up go.

Yet if Haye pulls out for anything other than a serious injury with severity that would obviously determine the outcome of the bout before they even get in the ring, he should be suspended for at least 6 months with 30 percent of his next purse garnished in a 10% split for each Klitschko's and Valuev's wasted time.

Haye says he's anxious to fight, and he should be, because he's probably got the odds in his favor based on power alone.

Evander Holyfield showed a blueprint for beating Valuev by staying on your toes outside, then darting in occasionally with point scoring flurries. Holyfield did enough to convince a packed Zurich house of over 15,000 though not the judges or most apron side observers, and Haye must have noticed.

Haye definitely appears to be fully capable of felling the big tree that will meet him in Nuremburg, no matter the relative silence that may result in boxing's endangered reign forest.

"I know he's enormous, and it is hard to find sparring partners anywhere near his size," admitted Haye, "but I'm still going for a knockout as usual."

Despite looking much smaller than Valuev, Haye's chances of a stoppage are good. While Haye may be dwarfed in many physical dimensions, the challenger's shoulders and arms seem to hold more explosive muscle.

A very likely scenario involves Haye lulling Valuev into the familiar "jab-wait-jab then wait some more" mindset that Valuev is widely criticized for. After that, it's easy to imagine Haye springing an overhand or short straight right like the one John Ruiz landed on Valuev in the 2nd session of their rematch last August '08.

Valuev was closer to going down than ever in his career as he sagged into the ropes. In fact, since it looked like those said strands kept Valuev on his tree trunk legs, it probably should have been called a knockdown.

If Ruiz was granted that moment he might have gone on to win, which many felt he did anyway. Now, after stepping aside for a pile of cash and the promise of facing the Valuev-Haye winner, Ruiz will sit and watch from the sidelines, though some reports indicate he'll get a currently unscheduled, featured spot on the undercard.