

Vitali's Klitschko's Fate: A Barren Heavyweight Division

Written by Ron Borges

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Sadly, regardless of what Vitali Klitschko does (other than getting himself knocked out of course) nothing particularly good will come of tonight's defense of the WBC title against young American hopeful Cristobal Arreola in Los Angeles.

If Klitschko wins, as is expected but not guaranteed, he will find himself in the same position he was in before the first bell tolled at the Staples Center and it is an oddly uncomfortable one. He will be a champion with only one really viable opponent anyone in the United States would care to see him face – his brother.

This will never happen. Both Vitali and WBO-IBF champion Wladimir Klitschko have repeatedly assured us nor should it. But such is the state of heavyweight boxing in the United States that a blood feud among brothers is about the only thing that could move most American sports fans even glance in the division's general direction.

One reason for that is simply jingoism, the realization that there hasn't been a true American heavyweight champion since Roy Jones and he was only champion for 36 minutes before giving the title he won from John Ruiz back as if it was on fire.

But as convenient as that excuse is it is not the major reason the heavyweight division needs a fit of brotherly hate to get people to watch in any sustainable numbers. It's simpler than that. It's that the fights are boring and the fighters more so.

The only exception to that rule is England's David Haye but the Hayemaker lost some gravitas when he gave both Klitschko brothers the oke-doke after agreeing to fight them and ended up instead in the ring with WBA champion Nikolai Valuev later this fall.

As a business move it was a good one assuming Haye wins a belt because it will give him more leverage when negotiating with either of the Klitschkos, which will surely happen if he defeats Valuev. But does anyone in America care about him? Not any more than they care about the Klitschkos, which is to say not much at all.

However, put the two brothers in opposite corners and watch the pay-per-view numbers mount. Not because either fighter grew in the eyes of American sports fans but because America always loves a freak show and what would be better than brothers battering each other? These guys would become the REAL Bash Brothers.

Now if Arreola, who is a prohibitive underdog, finds some way to deliver a crushing blow that stops the elder Klitschko he might suddenly transform the division because he would be the first Mexican-American heavyweight champion in boxing history and one with the possibility of both a rematch with Vitali and a grudge match with Wladimir.

Since Hispanics are the most loyal and committed fight fans in the country, someone like

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Arreola could become an instant cult hero and thus create new interest in a division that went fallow in America a long time ago. Only problem there is the odds on that happening are wider than Arreola's waist, which is saying something.

"Vitali Klitschko has never fought anyone like me," Arreola said. "Someone that's willing to take a punch to give a punch; someone that has a lot of heart and fights with emotion. This is not going to be a boring jabfest."

If Arreola is right that strategy would seem one destined to rid the ring of him earlier than he might think but then again who knows? Nobody, which is part of the problem this time.

"I don't think about the future because there is no future without a victory Saturday night," Vitali Klitschko said this week.

Sadly, at least in the United States, there isn't much of one for Vitali Klitschko with a victory Saturday night either. Not unless he's willing to break a few family ties...and maybe a family nose...to create one.