BIG BOY BEAN COUNTING - It's been almost half a year since TSS's last Heavyweight Top Ten List. While these days that seems barely enough time for current, convoluted contract negotiations compared to better remembered eras when true contenders might engage again and again, there was still enough meaningful activity among upper echelon talent to shake up the scene.

So considering that Vitali Klitschko and Cristobal Arreola, for better or worse, drew more stateside attention than usual to the 200 plus pound division, we present rankings updated since last May.

It's a boxing baker's dozen.

Our astute universe of TSS posters will agree or pick it apart, but hopefully every fighter listed here will clash with at least one other man on this chart within the next six months so we get some head to head status verification. Some such collisions are already on the duke out drawing board.

First, let's look at a pair of performers, previously tied for the 10th position, who have been dropped from the rankings due to inactivity. For Tony Thompson that's because of no bouts since last April, when he was fed easy, smaller victim Adran Serin as an undercard reward for sparring with Klitschko prior to Vitali's stoppage of Juan Carlos Gomez.

Next, we bid a fond, but quite possibly not final adieu to the often great Evander Holyfield. Sentimentality only stretches so far.

Gomez gave Klitschko a much tougher night than Arreola did, and might have deserved a 10 spot, but he hasn't appeared since, perhaps due to damage Klitschko inflicted. Gomez and Arreola could be a fine fight.

There are two new additions. US based Kevin Johnson takes a piece of the ten hole pie and German based, Russian transplanted strongman Dennis Boytsov gets added a notch above that.

The biggest move is within the same family tree and is highly disputable, but since there is never a guarantee when medical issues are involved, former number one Wladimir needing shoulder surgery is shifting him into the 2 position while brother V, coming off the dominant performance versus Christobal Arreola, now claims top honors.

Here's the latest list, followed by supplemental notations.

1. Vitali Klitschko
2. Wladimir Klitschko

3. Eddie Chambers
4. Nikolai Valuev
5. John Ruiz
6. Alexander Povetkin
7. Ruslan Chagaev
8. Alexander Dimitrenko
9. (tie) Dennis Boytsov, Jason Estrada
10. (tie) David Haye, Kevin Johnson

Vitali swaps the top slots with little brother due to Wladimir's shoulder surgery. Injuries have historically caused the K bros as many problems as most opponents, and there's no guarantee what shape Wlad's jab is in after the scalpel.

Chambers and Dimitrenko switched previous positions the old fashioned way, by fighting each other. The win likely boosted Chambers to another level, what the harsh boxing lesson inflicted on Dimitrenko, who I saw as the future of the division, remains to be seen.

Valuev endures more unjustified abuse than almost anyone brave enough to pursue this career, and there's a good chance Haye will send "The Russian Giant" crashing to even further ridicule this November. Yet having observed Valuev in more than a few spots on the planet, I think what he may lack in technique he makes up for in character. Valuev understands he'll need a career best effort to shut Haye up and seems ready to put the necessary preparatory work in. I wouldn't mind seeing Valuev pull it off.

One thing that hasn't changed since the last list is that Ruiz still has better credentials than any other US fighter, whether you like his style or not. For that he gets the benefit of the doubt for far too much recent inactivity and probable aging. Ruiz is currently set for a step aside appearance on the Valuev-Haye undercard with a promise, for whatever that may end up being worth, at a shot against the winner.

Povetkin moves up a couple notches due to retroactive consideration of the skills he showed in a disputed victory against Chambers in January '08, and a post-leg injury, rust shedding showing against Jason Estrada in April. Povetkin should stay busier, but he's hoping to reclaim a cancelled shot against Wladimir. Povetkin has also faced some other decent US opposition.

Chagaev didn't show much more than relative durability against Wladimir in June, but that alone helped temporarily derail the Klitschko express. Chagaev took that fight on short notice and will be better served if he keeps the willing attitude.

Big bopper Boytsov makes his top 10 debut after conking out durable Taras Bidenko in June. Now it's Boytsov's time, as it was for Arreola, to show what he has against top competition, though not necessarily as big a leap as Arreola took against Vitali.

Boytsov is scheduled to face Jason Gavern on October 10th. Gavern's marketability stems from the old " has never been stopped" tag, but Boytsov should end that claim to dubious fame. After that, it's time to meet someone with more slugging substance. A clash between he and

Arreola has the makings of a mini classic.

Estrada had some decent moments and hung tough in losing to Povetkin in April, then got back on the horse with a TKO of Zuri Lawrence in September, which is way better than nothing.

Johnson stopped still unproven fellow prospect Devin Vargas impressively, and at least appears to be serious about staying in shape as Vitali's next opponent.

Haye, previously number 5, did nothing since last spring but talk and withdraw from meetings against both K bros. Haye kept a ranking based solely on the intangible inertia and public relations charisma he's managed to produce off less substantial showings than almost everyone else on this list. Still, I see him as the favorite against Valuev, which could finally lead to an actual Klitschko fight, and perhaps even a legitimate claim to the actual heavyweight championship.

Arreola and Thompson could certainly shake things up should they choose to go for it, and relative newcomers like huge Alexander Ustinov (still very much a work in progress) and Odlanier Solis may have an impact by the next edition. Solis, whose attitude has been questionable, seems on track scheduling respectable Fres Oquendo as a replacement after Johnson made the smart business move of withdrawing with visions of Klitschko sugarplums.

Looking back to the top heavyweights I've seen in their prime, live and up close, I'd have to say that except for the Klitschkos, fighters like Holmes, Holyfield, Lewis, Tyson, and Bowe would probably have many easy pickings these days, but I think you could say that of almost any era compared to the '80s-90s heroes.

The present conking crop certainly isn't the best group in the history of the sport, but they're also nowhere near the worst.