

Denis Boytsov: The Next Big Thing or Not?

Written by Phil Woolever
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STEP UP TIME IN DEUTSCHLAND - Undefeated heavyweight prospect Denis Boytsov upped his professional slate to 26-0 (21) last weekend in Rostock, Germany with a 7th round TKO over the USA's Jason Gavern, 18-6-3 (8).

"Next year is my year," asserted the personable Boytsov heading into the contest, and the song remained the same afterward.

Boytsov became the first man to stop the admirably willing and usually durable Gavern, who hit the canvas four times and heard a pair of eight counts before patient referee Juergen Langos acknowledged the obvious and waved the fight off at 2:08 of the seventh session before a near sell-out swarm of around 4,000.

The basic assumption now is that Boytsov is more than ready for bigger game.

If so, it's about time. Recently, the 23 year-old Russian transplant has been involved in matches where the biggest question was whether or not his opponent would be able make it to the final bell.

For most prospective punching bags, that presents a very longshot proposition, but venturing into higher heavyweight ground presents different possible scenarios.

Stopping a tough but limited warhorse like Gavern isn't near the same as a KO against anybody on the bottom half ladder of recognized top contenders listed by any alphabet group, or even recognized rumblers hanging near the fringe.

So far the biggest name on Boytsov's resume is probably Vinnie Maddalone, and while Boytsov distinctly dominated an 8 round decision last year, Maddalone was in the fight all the way and even won near equal applause from the German assembly afterward.

That's not to say Boytsov won't prove worthy of a title shot someday soon, but at this point he just hasn't demonstrated much more than the ability to take care of business as he should against overmatched opponents.

Boytsov still seems too much of a walloping work in progress to tackle any of the division's elite. Currently, Boytsov probably wouldn't fare much differently against either Klitschko than Cristobal Arreola sadly did against Vitali.

Boytsov against the winner of Nikolai Valuev - David Haye is much more intriguing, though Boytsov would probably have to wait until John Ruiz got his supposedly promised shot at the winner. While promotional conflicts between Boytsov's Universum group and Valuev's agents at Sauerland Event make it unlikely, if Boytsov really wanted to make a move, he'd volunteer his services for relatively nothing to take the still unfilled 8 round spot against Ruiz on the

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Valuev-Haye undercard November 7th.

It would be great to see Boytsov try to tag out Ruslan Chagaev or Alexander Povetkin but risk versus reward factors will keep management on every side away from any dotted lines for either of those affairs.

Meanwhile, Boytsov-Arreola has the potential for a multi-knockdown classic. Too bad risk-reward still rules.

Maybe the most impressive heavyweight KO in the past few weeks wasn't Klitschko's leather-landslided erosion of Arreola, but Odlanier Solis's quick elimination of Monte "Two Guns Still in the Holster" Barrett the same evening Boytsov teed off on Gavern. Barrett showed he remains a willing competitor by fighting on very short notice. He might still be able to make a respectable showing against a "top gun" if he had more time to prepare, but Solis's effort cast Haye's previous blowout of Barrett in a different light though the "Hayemker's" supporters will claim Haye ruined Barrett before Solis got to him.

Bottom line: Boytsov still doesn't have a win over anyone as respected as Barrett. Heading into last weekend he was probably considered ahead of Solis in the prospect line.

So, while Solis made a surprisingly strong case for a spot in the top ten rankings, now its Boytsov's turn to step up.

Boytsov - Solis anyone? It would be a very big fight in Germany.

There are countless sturdy studs to be hammered within the safe perimeters of Boytsov's adopted residence, but unless he fights someone that presents a real challenge, what's the point any more?

If Team Boytsov insists on keeping home court comfort, some German based fighters that could present real problems and a good payday are fellow undefeated newcomer Alexander Ustinov or proven tough Juan Carlos Gomez.

The winner of the upcoming Alexander Dimetrenko - Luan Krasniqi rematch is another intriguing possibility, so it isn't like Boytsov has run out of top tutorial opportunities.

It should be remembered that Boytsov wasn't fighting in the main event, or even the semi-main feature last Saturday at Rostock. That spotlighted honor went to Ina Menzer (against Esther Schouten in a heroic rematch slugfest) and Susi Kentikian (nothing shabby versus Julia Sahin, either).

Menzer and Kentikian have proven themselves again and again, against the best available opponents.

Hopefully, Boytsov comes from the same championship mold and it wouldn't be a surprise to find him at the top of the hill someday soon. Indeed, Boytsov seems capable of becoming that

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much sought, so-called "action savior" of the heavyweights.

It's well past time to find out.

Maybe all Boytsov needs to do right away is find a big name, public relations, confidence building opponent brave enough to travel to Germany in the face of long odds and short money.

Somebody without much chance of victory that would draw a crowd and provide that globally recognized, knocked out name for the record book.

Paging Riddick Bowe?