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You've got to give David Haye credit for picking his giants carefully. While fishing this past summer he caught two big ones. In the process of reeling them in, he realized that they'd be too much to handle once he'd gotten them onto the boat. He quickly cut bait and bailed out. He waited for a little time to pass, cast his line again, and wound up hooking a still bigger fish. The difference this time is that his latest catch doesn't put up much of a struggle.

So the question is: Does little former cruiserweight champion David Haye have what it takes to land the WBA heavyweight championship from boxing's biggest ever title holder, Nikolay Valuev?

That's the first and last of a lot of unanswered questions about this fight. In many ways, we know more about what each of these guys can't do than about what they can.

But we'll start with what they can do.

David Haye can punch, especially with his right. Although not a fluid mover, he's able to get around the ring fairly quickly and certainly much more quickly than the immobile Valuev. And frankly, that's about all Haye has as a fighter. Apart from that, he's a great talker and he's been taking his vitamins, to boot.

Nikolay Valuev is able to throw a near ring-length jab with some pop from the first bell to the last. For a man his size, he's in incredible condition. He's physically strong too, but he's not a big puncher. And that's about it. Actually, his jab may be tapering off some. He barely threw any during the later rounds of the dance marathon that was billed as a fight last December against Evander Holyfield. So maybe he's just in shape and strong. That's not much for a heavyweight champion to brag about, is it?

Valuev, who wasn't very good to begin with, seems to be going through a fairly rapid decline. A couple of years ago, when winning questionable decisions against good fighters like John Ruiz and Larry Donald and more recently an indisputable one against Sergey Lyakhovich, Valuev kept up an unimaginative but steady stream of left jabs. Because of his immensity, this punch alone was enough to make it difficult for opponents to get near enough to cause him any damage. But against Holyfield, the jab was no longer in evidence. And his conditioning, which has always been a staple for him, didn't factor in against a forty-six year old man who was outweighed by nearly one hundred pounds and who has a career history of terrible conditioning. Furthermore, I think that Valuev's chin, once reached, is very unreliable. In what was supposed to be his US coming out party (he'd fought in the States a couple of times earlier in his career), he was rocked on a number of occasions by light hitting Monte Barrett. And before he conveniently bowed out in the third round of their 2007 fight, obedient Jameel McCline hurt him.

A lot of this may stem from Valuev's being a reluctant warrior. It's clear that he doesn't enjoy boxing, has no natural aptitude for it, and is simply trying to earn a good living before settling

into middle age. It seems many Eastern Bloc fighters view boxing as a means to set them up for whatever they're going to do for the rest of their lives.

These are all good signs for David Haye. But Haye has problems of his own. Although he'll probably come into the fight at about 215 pounds, he's really a cruiserweight with some nutritional supplement assistance. He'll be outweighed by 100 pounds anyway, but if he were in true boxing shape, it'd be more like 120. Haye has boxed—this isn't a typo— only 84 professional rounds. He has gone over ten rounds once. Although I don't believe that he's intending to go more than a few rounds this time out, he's going to have a major problem if Valuev doesn't prove cooperative. And while it's true that the champion is no puncher, Haye's chin is very poor. He's been knocked out by Carl Thompson, who's a good banger, but who has fought nearly half of his career at light heavyweight. Light hitting Jean Marc Mormeck also had him on the deck.

As if all this isn't enough of a deterrent, Haye will be fighting Valuev in Germany , where Wilfred Sauerland has kept the champion as protected as a newborn. In order to knock the big guy out, Haye is going to have to make sure that the punch that does it doesn't stray out of the face area.

At first, I didn't understand why David Haye would withdraw from two huge paydays in favor of a much smaller, although still lucrative, one. But I've figured it out. David Haye is thinking, "I might actually beat Valuev! And then I'll make even more money when Wlad or Vitali knocks me out."

He probably should have taken the Wladimir Klitschko fight first though. Wlad is by far the brother more susceptible to being kayoed by a good, unpredictable puncher. The likelihood is that Haye himself would have been knocked out by Klitschko in a round or two, but he would have collected bigtime for the privilege. Reassured by that loss, Sauerland and company would have still given Haye a call. If he loses to Valuev, the option of fighting either Klitschko will be off the table. That's what I expect will happen on November 7th.

Look for Nikolay Valuev's size and conditioning to be too much for David Haye to overcome, he'll be worn down and stopped somewhere around the 8th or 9th round.