OUT OF THE SPOTLIGHT - With all the recent news regarding higher echelon boxers, it's been pretty easy lately for some pretty decent scraps to be relegated to minor news.

Sometimes that lack of attention ends up just as well, whenever the lesser lights end up putting on lesser fights.

However, there are more than just a few instances when an intriguing contest falls through the coverage cracks or gets forgotten in place of a beer run or trip to the backyard smoking lounge. Solid fighters trade heavy shots with little to show for it but a blink of the public eye.

One such situation could be Saturday night's 10 round Atlantic City appetizer between Tony "The Tiger" Thompson and Chazz Witherspoon, set as a warm up act on the undercard of the Paul Williams - Sergio Martinez show at Boardwalk Hall.

The minor crossroads conker could end up producing a future alphabet challenger, or at least a possible opponent for popular Cristobal Arreola, who faces Brian Minto on the same ringpost agenda.

The 38 year old Thompson has already been stopped in a widely criticized challenge for consensus champion Wladimir Klitschko's laurels, in a resulting 11th round TKO loss in July 2008 in Hamburg, Germany. That fight occurred during a time when Klitschko was respected less than he is currently, and it was the type of methodically dull exercise that seemed to make the lack of appreciation warranted.

Klitschko finally scored a knockdown to end a fight where the most action prior to that came when Thompson and Wlad literally fell all over each other after a mauling clinch type waltz. When they got up from the canvas, it looked like only Klitschko was motivated to go on.

Still, Klitschko had a couple cuts and bruises to show for the bout, and he declared that Thompson had exhibited extraordinary determination. It seemed like that appraisal was heartfelt when the Klitschko team hired Thompson as a primary sparring partner for brother Vitali's defense against Juan Carlos Gomez last March, and also rewarded Thompson with a featured preliminary spot on the high profile card.

Southpaw Thompson, 32-2 (20), looked like a real contender when he scored a 5th round TKO of the usually tough to dent Adrian Serin that night, but since then Thompson hasn't done anything to capitalize on new momentum until now.

Serin was John Ruiz's opponent on the David Haye-Nikolai Valuev undercard, and comparing Ruiz's 7th round TKO to Thompson's earlier performance, Thompson looked more impressive.

For now, neither 6'5 Thompson or 6'4 Witherspoon is in over their head. Nor can they afford to

look past Saturday, but the winner can look skyward to a much bigger check in his next fight.

Whether the 28 year old Witherspoon, 26-1 (18) can take his own sizeable step toward a legitimate ranking and solid payday against somebody like Arreola, Alexander Povetkin, Denis Boytsov or Alexander Dimitrenko remains to be seen.

If David Haye beats John Ruiz and subsequent negotiations with the Klitschkos stall, Haye might want the type stay busy but safe type payday Thompson or Witherspoon could present. Same goes if Ruiz pulls off the longshot against Haye and looks for a celebratory homecoming.

The best thing the loser can expect would probably be a 2011 fight against Evander Holyfield in some country that hasn't had a major fight in years.

Both Thompson and Witherspoon should be able to find plenty of motivation Saturday night, and if they both bring what we still have to call their "B" game, they could find themselves in a comfortable profit margin landscape similar to what Kevin Johnson gets to explore a bit of Switzerland versus Vitali Klitschko next week or the sugarplum opportunity Eddie Chambers is sitting on.

In other words, the winner of Thompson-Witherspoon could very well be just a fight or two away from a shot at all the marbles.

On paper, Thompson has faced much better opposition, on bigger stages, but the match is really about who understands the stakes and responded better during training.

This isn't a claim that the winner deserves a top ten ranking, but in the slowly but surely revitalizing heavyweight division these
days even on the fringe there can be a little pots of gold.