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For Tomasz Adamek heavyweight boxing is a weighty issue.

The former light heavyweight and cruiserweight champion is trying to become the first man to have once owned both those titles and gone on to win the heavyweight championship but to do it he must overcome his genes as well as the geniuses who run boxing.

At best Adamek is a 220-pound Lilliputian trying to travel, like Gulliver, into a world of Brobdingnagian. Once there was a time when a 220-pound heavyweight would be considered a hefty man. To be 220 was to outweigh Rocky Marciano by 32 pounds but that was several generations and a lot of improved eating habits and training regimens ago, not to mention long before the advent of HGH and other chemicals that can make a man's body swell as his waist shrinks.

Tonight, Adamek will step into the ring in Ontario, Calif, to face heavyweight contender Cris Arreola, outweighed by 33 ½ pounds of mostly suet. This will be his third foray into the Land of Brobdingnag and not the most weight he has been asked to give away, having stopped washed up Andrew Golota in the biggest heavyweight fight in the history of Poland in the fifth round despite being outweighed by a remarkable 42 pounds when first beginning this somewhat quixotic quest.

Even against the 5-10 former U.S. Olympian Jason Estrada, Adamek gave away 17 pounds in a fight that proved to be tougher than Adamek's supporters expected in large measure because of that tonnage problem. But now he will be facing not only a much bigger man but also one with considerable punching power if less than memorable boxing skills.

Arreola (28-1, 25 KO) has been considered by some in boxing circles to be the best American heavyweight project in recent years. If this is true then the heavyweight title will not soon reside on these shores because Arreola has always seemed to me to be a figment of the imaginations (or hopes) of American fight critics who desperately want to see the stranglehold on the title presently held by European champions end.

While that would be good for heavyweight boxing in the U.S., Cris Arreola isn't likely to be the one to deliver it. Yet because of his 3 ½ inch height edge and 33 ½ pound weight advantage this is a telling moment for Adamek (40-1, 27 KO) because if he cannot beat him he has no hope against the likes of Wladimir or Vitali Klitschko or England's fast and powerful David Haye.

Not surprisingly, Adamek insists size will not be the deciding factor in his quest to move within a fight or two of a heavyweight title shot. Rather it will be what it most often is in boxing. This will be a night decided by skill, will and most of all speed of hand and foot.

Arreola has none of the latter two and the lackluster way he prepares himself for a fight makes one wonder if he has the will to be a champion either. Yet what he does possess is the power to

derail someone else, although if one looks at his resume the only memorable names are Jameel McCline, whom he stopped in four rounds, and the elder Klitschko, who beat him half to death before their fight was stopped with Arreola in tears after 10 lopsided rounds.

Of Arreola's power, Adamek is wisely wary. What he is not is terribly worried.

"The size of Cris Arreola really makes no difference to me,'' Adamek said this week. It's what is in your head that matters, not the guy's size. I dont plan to go down after three, four or five punches from Cris.''

While Arreola's knockout ratio is impressive his list of victims is not. He is, like so many fighters today, the product of a system that coddles prospects to the point they become contenders in name only. While they may move up the rankings their skills do not improve and so when opportunity finally knocks it most often knocks them out, as Klitschko did to Arreola in an embarrassingly one-sided affair.

In contrast, Adamek has fought most of the top light heavyweights and cruiserweights in the world, many of them in pitched battles that pleased crowds and from which he emerged bloody but victorious. Even his sole loss, to light heavyweight champion Chad Dawson, was a competitive affair, though clearly won by Dawson. Considering that Dawson is not only the best light heavyweight in the world put among the best pound-for-pound fighters in the world there was no shame in his performance.

The same could not be said for Arreola against Klitschko. Arreola might challenge for the pound after pound title but not pound for pound. At 251 pounds that night he was in the best shape of his life and still out of shape. His comeback against journeyman Brian Minto saw him enter the ring 13 pounds heavier, a shameful exhibition even though he stopped him in four rounds.

Arreola seems to have learned nothing from his troubles with Klitschko when it comes to preparation for a fight that and will step in against Adamek looking the same as always – which is full bodied, to be kind. Adamek will be in shape, skilled, aggressive and knowing that if he defeats Arreola it propels him onto the heavyweight world stage.

"I'm fighting for myself and for history,'' he said succinctly. While true, he's also fighting for all those boxing fans who believe fighters should be well conditioned and well schooled. He is both. Arreola is neither.

What Cris Arreola is is big. If that's enough to beat Tomasz Adamek it will be too bad for boxing.