

THE TSS TAKEAWAY: Readers' Cleanest, Hardest Shots Post Vitali-Briggs

Written by Michael Woods
Sunday, 17 October 2010 19:00

As the heavyweight division goes, so goes boxing, right?

You had a fight featuring maybe the top 168 pounder on the planet, Lucian Bute, on Friday, yet far and away the most feedback from TSS Universe comes from the Saturday demolition display by Vitali Klitschko, who banged on Shannon Briggs drum all night in Hamburg Saturday, and put such a hellacious beating on the proud/stubborn Brooklyn native, that doctors feared he suffered brain damage. Yep, we are still fascinated by the behemoths, even if by and large the models on display draw yawns and dismissive chatter.

Everyone was massively relieved when we learned that initial reports that had Briggs in critical condition were erroneous. Thanks be to a higher power, or fate, that we aren't suffering through a vigil, or awaiting information on a service. So, with the knowledge that we must continually remind ourselves, and refs, and cornerpersons, and commissioners, that it is ALWAYS ALWAYS better to stop a bout a round early, than a round late, the debate continues--are the Klitschkos all that?

Or are they merely very, very good in a very, very bad, maybe the worst ever, era of heavyweights? TSS-EM tends to think the bottom of the division in just about any other era before men became supersized could have their way with the lower tier top 10 guys now. The 80s era booblielicious top 20 heavies had an amateur pedigree that put them in a higher class than today's top 20. The decline of the sport, of the attention paid to it by the lamestream media (thanks Mrs. Palin!), the siphoning off of talent, spurred by the lack of a robust amateur scene, and the lure of the NBA and NFL dream, and 80s era mommies being fearful that their kids would end up brain damaged like Muhammad Ali, has resulted in a division ruled by two men who indeed would have been at the tip top of ANY heavyweight era, who would have been a hard mountain to climb for ANY all-time great heavyweight.

Now, time to end the tongue bath...and get the top best comments from our all-star band of commenters. A solid batch, with Mortcola leading the pack. Now, if we can get El Feroz back on full-time duty, all will be well in TSS Land.

15) In Touch: What did anybody think was going to happen? And why would anyone in their right mind think Briggs stood a chance of making it a fight? Briggs was, at best, in his prime, a contender and only that. How could he think he could now, way past his prime, challenge one of the top two heavyweights in the world? The heavyweight division is a scam. There is no good talent. And we have Tarver making noise. It's only noise, folks. If he fights a Klitschko he will get annihilated.

14) Brownsugar: Ever since Bute's Come to Jesus Meeting with Andrade in their first battle, Bute has been practicing the ABCs of boxing, Always Be Closing, Always Be Closing, Always Be Closing (from Alec Baldwin in Glen Gary/Glen Ross). Bute's been closing the show by setting up immaculate one punch precision shots to the liver or the chin. And I can no longer consider

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that to be a fluke. Ive always taken pleasure in dissing Bute in the past, but his skill can no longer be denied. Andrade showed that Bute is certainly human but hes stepped up his game considerably in the last couple of years, even though its only been against meat & potatoes bangers like Brinkley. Theres going to be a heck of a bounty on Butes head by the time the Super Six is done. If the winner of that tourney can pop Butes cherry, hell be sitting on top of the world. Momentarily, anyway.

13) Joe: Briggs took an incredible beating. This may sound crazy but my hat is off to the man. I expected some BS excuse after four rounds. He deserves a couple more paydays; it looks like he literally went out on his shield.

12) Zapata: A couple more paydays? No, he doesnt. Hes thirty eight years old. A couple more paydays and he might not see forty.

11) Amay: This was a dreadful fight, just dreadful. Briggs wouldnt even throw, let alone a jab. It just baffles me how little these pro fighters of today throw or use a jab, it is just embarrassing. On another note, Vitali fights like a robot, is there to get hit, sure has some head movement but NO torso flexion or rotation and his arms and hands are literally down at his sides. Double that jab and send a right hand down. Or jab straight to the stomach and follow up to with a right. Can someone please throw punches at this guy and not PUSH their punches at him? I think a healthy Holyfield of fivw years ago beats this version of Vitali. No joke, its hard to give Vitali credit when he was fighting a punching bag in Briggs who did NOT punch or disrupt Vitali, just stood there all night. Why does Briggs try to shoulder roll but without the shoulder roll? All he does is keep his right on his right-side chin, but he doesnt roll and he doesnt tip his front shoulder up to block his left side... wth is that? Shoulder roll posture without the shoulder roll defense, good idea Briggs wth.

10) DaveB: Shannon Briggs has to be given credit for not folding, considering the *ss whipping he got. I really thought Vitali was going to end it in round eight, I think it was, after he had Briggs buckle and almost out the round before. These guys already know what the Klit brothers are going to do, they know they are almost seven feet tall and yet they all get in there with the deer caught in the headlights look. The Klitschkos deserve a lot of credit. But since the 80s the heavyweight division has been weak. That IMO is why guys like Tyson, Lewis, and the brothers can rule and seem so invincible. I give these guys a lot of credit and as the years go on we will be comparing athletes today to yesterdays athletes. People over time get bigger, stronger, have better nutrition, training, better technology, equipment, dont have to fight as often and so on. I question Vitali being the hardest puncher even though he has the highest knockout record. That is just a statistic and has to be examined further. First, Cooney and Shavers werent champions but if you look at their records they got people out early almost all of the time. Vitali was originally a kickboxer so part of his career was doing that. From 1996 - 2001 he got them out of there early. From 2001 - 2010 he gets them out of there late. Part of that is because he is very tentative but part of his high rate comes from the fact that he is so tall and can deliver his punches easily. I think that ko record is over hyped.

9) DaveB: Im happy to hear that Briggs doesnt have any long lasting damage. If there ever was a fight that should have been stopped it was that one. Yeah, he may have a moral victory

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but so what? Because he sure got an earthly beating. If he has a couple more beatings anywhere close to that one he may end up like Greg Page or he may be slurring his speech in a few years. Was it really worth it? I do wish him all the best.

8) Robert Curtis: I know I'm not in there eating the punches, but I would take issue with gushing praise of Shannon's character or that no one can say Shannon Briggs simply went to Hamburg to pick up a payday. Yeah, Shannon stayed in there for 12, took the punishment and his face will no doubt be sore for a month. But I do not believe that Shannon Briggs either trained to win this fight or ever fought to win in this fight. Briggs seemed more concerned with his breathing than throwing punches. When Shannon did throw, there were few bad intentions and some he just threw in the air when Vitali was nowhere near him. This is the heavyweight championship of the world, folks. It used to mean something. If it doesn't mean anything to the fighter, how can it mean anything to the fans? I don't expect fighters to go out on their shield, but when they take a nap and digest three double-cheeseburgers on their shield, it's an insult to the sport. Shannon had no legs or game. He seemed a sluggish sitting duck. Vitali did his part by staying busy and throwing lots of power punches, but I don't understand why he did not knock Shannon out. Does Shannon have an impossibly hard chin or is Vitali a humanitarian? It seemed like Vitali could hit Shannon at will, especially in the last 3 or 4 rounds. Why didn't he go for a TKO at least? Enough unanswered punches and the ref would have to stop it. Were these guys just sparring or giving us a real fight? I don't know. Here goes Mortcola harping on the astonishing fistic wizardry of Vitali Klitschko. Yeah, Vitali is a great fighter who has earned his place and has no peers. But he didn't risk much in this fight. Like the British commandos say, He who dares, wins. Neither of these guys did anything daring and we all lost.

7) Philo: Give it up for Briggs who came and was a punching bag. I expected him to take a dive or quit inside of 3 rounds as soon as a jab landed. But I can't applaud his effort beyond that. Six waving punches per round ain't gonna get it done even in a Toughman competition. Abysmal punch output. I agree with Radam G that Klitschko's putrid and a disgrace. Anyone would look masterful against Briggs. On this night, he was MAYBE a top-65 or 70 heavyweight, and that's saying something given that this is the worst heavyweight era in human history. Klitschko can beat up on fat retreads and golfers until the cows come home, but I ain't buying it. Even HBO and Showtime consider the Ks untelevisable.

6) Mortcola: Please, all of you who can't accept the boxing supremacy of the Klitschkos - just chill for a while. I can't handle another round of boxing fans in denial making unpleasant comments. Yeah, Briggs didn't earn this shot - but he earned respect by taking it, and taking it. Klitschko was, again, masterful. Fast-handed, accurate, nearly impossible to hit because of that moving head and snaking upper body; thudding shots from every angle; not even breathing hard in the 12th round. Same basic format as when VK fights young fighters, contenders, old men, taller, shorter....same formula. Briggs called VK a great fighter, better than Lewis, harder hitting than Foreman, incredibly fast. You may not like him, or his equally gifted and disciplined brother, but if you don't see it, you don't know boxing, or you have trouble with reality. Now let's get interested in finding a heavyweight who can give him more than a good workout.

5) Condor: I'm in the minority here, but have good company in Mortcola. I've never really understood the Klitschko venom that exists, but the criticisms I read here are baseless. Vitali

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has lost twice (Ill stick to Vitali only), once to Byrd and once to Lewis. Against Byrd, he was winning widely, suffered a significant shoulder injury, and resigned on his stool. Granted, Byrd aint Ernie Shavers, but he was a slick, crafty guy that possessed serious ring IQ and likely would have sensed, honed in on, and exacerbated a very real injury. Discretion is the better part of valor. We all know what he did to Lewis, and the circumstances of his defeat. As mediocre as Briggs is, Klitschko toyed with the guy and was completely unmarked and fresh after 12 rounds, while Briggs was likely exiting in an ambulance for a hospital visit. How many guys do that to Briggs? Is it Klitschkos fault he fights in this era? And speaking of this era, yes, its bad, but is it really THAT much worse than other eras? This point is made all the timed, but its never been truly examined. What is missing is exposure, and competitive fights, because the Ks fights are all so one-sided that people immediately discount the fighters and blame the era. Vitali is 6 8, an optimum 250 lbs, ALWAYS in shape, has a granite chin, effectively awkward and brilliant style, and thunderous power. Do you really think that a 200 pound Joe Frazier type guy would swat him like a fly? Briggs said that Vitali is the best hes ever fought. Was he waxing poetic because he went the distance? Was he concussed? Or was he saying something that was quite right?

4) Mortcola@jury and Robert: Guy has one of the biggest KO percentages in boxing history. Fewer decisions than Holmes, Ali, Foreman, Frazier, Hagler, Hearns, Louis...Occasionally, the other guy doesnt go, the ref and the corner dont stop it, the guy is hell-bent on toughing it out, and it goes to a decision. Pretty common occurrence, but it doesnt happen often with them. You may not like the guys style, but, sorry, hes done the same job on everyone since hes champ, the deserving and the undeserving, and was the only guy to ever outfight Lewis while it lasted. The criticisms some of you are vomiting up are without merit. Not their fault the division is weak - except that their complete blowouts highlight the vast difference between them and their opponents. As for the HBO and Showtime passing, this is about sales and marketing, the business of doing business, not a value judgment on their fighting skills.

3) Robert Curtis@Mortcola: Mortcola, Im going to get out of your way and let you give Vitali the big tongue bath you always give him. I agree that VK has a good trick bag and makes guys miss with defensive skills. However, I dont dig it when you drop specious statistics like Fewer decisions than Holmes, Ali, Foreman, Frazier, Hagler, Hearns, Louis.... I dont like to hear those names in the same breath with Vitali. Those guys fought in real eras with scary contenders up the wazoo. There were boxing gyms on every street corner back then. Yeah, I know Louis had the parade of bums here and there, but he fought a lot of tough matches all the way to the bitter end, from Tommy Farr and Billy Conn all the way to Ezzard Charles, Walcott and his hard loss to Marciano. Ali fought pluggers like Evangelista and London, sure, but he also fought prime Foreman, Norton and a death-defying trilogy with Joe Frazier. Holmes, Hagler and Leonard ended their careers fighting the best fighters, not the worst. To borrow from DaveB, is is the same story over and over with VKs fights. They play out like bad sequels to bad action films. The hero becomes an impossibly heroic parody of himself while the bad guys just get more lame and ridiculous. If Vitali cant find a legit contender, he should stop cheating the fans. Hes cannibalizing his own legacy by staging these sparring matches with inferior competition.

2) Brownsugar: I have to wonder if there has ever been a division so weak that an injured champ emeritus (Vitali), could come back in his late 30s and dominate four years later like he was never gone. Where the top contenders have eating disorders(Arreola), or fighters like Peter

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who represented their nation in the Olympics after only 22 fights (just like American Deontay Wilder who most recently earned a bronze). I don't care where the fighters come from but when will we ever see two skilled heavyweights fight for glory over 12 rounds like Holyfield/Bowe or Holmes vs Norton over 15 grueling rounds?? Statistics can become very misleading especially when top contenders like Peter struggle with a blowup aging middleweight like Toney and the K brothers have a big height and reach advantage along with 15-45 lbs over most of the opposition. I don't think there's any comparison to the golden years of the heavyweights especially when even many of the contenders had 100-175 amateur fights and Olympic experience (like Duane Bobick) and the weight difference hardly exceeded 15lbs. This isn't meant to demean the Klitschkos who certainly deserve a place in history, I just don't see any clearcut valid perspectives made by stats alone.

1) Mortcola@Saint and Condor: I try and sometimes fail to not be too much of a flag waver. My heroes have been Holmes, Hagler, Hearns, Arguello. I have a high standard for how boxers perform, skill and character-wise. I just see something irrational going on with the K-hating. I also remember that in EVERY ERA except the Ali-Frazier days, people complained about the quality of opposition. In the 80s, you had these round-robins of close, boring fights by big, reasonably-skilled, but unmotivated heavys with pendulous breasts. Ali DID fight London, Evangelista, couldn't KO little Patterson. But in few periods of history have the champs completely shut down EVERY FRIGGIN fighter they go against, regardless of style. When Wlad shut down Eddie Chambers, a REALLY GOOD, slick, athletic, intelligent boxer, without even using most of his arsenal, I finally said, this is something different. Chambers would have been competitive in any era of heavies. He was not able to even get off on that night. I grant anyone the right not to enjoy their style. But I think one has to be in serious denial, clouding their historical awareness, to make the case that the Ks are putrid, and less than even with the best of the historical heavies. Let's say that for decades now the heavies have NOT contained the cream of the athletic crop. Our heavies have not dominated the top ten ranks, but have at least fought reasonably competitively against the Europeans, who ARE skilled, conditioned athletes on the rise. However, the Ks, with drastically different styles, utterly dominate all of them. They do it with ring mastery, excellent power (more power in Wlad, more variety in Vitali), and complete ring generalship. As a demanding fight fan, the skills and execution are just obvious. NOT LIKING what you watch - or not liking Europeans with Ph.D.s running the show - is just not justification to dismiss their skills. One reason an era sucks is that someone is that much better than everyone else. That's no fun. But you don't get to dominate an era unless you are that good. And, no, I have no interest in giving anyone other than my wife and Minka Kelly (together) a tongue bath. But I'm in a happy minority that sees the skills, intelligence, and discipline, and gives proper respect.