

Port of Call: Blitzko for Klitschko, Hospital Digs for Briggs

Written by Phil Woolever
Monday, 18 October 2010 19:00

ALTONA, HAMBURG -In Germany Shannon Briggs hospitalization subsequent to absorbing 36 minutes, or quite possibly a lifetimes worth of heavy leather was a major headline of the weekend.

The bout received plenty of prefight sports related coverage but Briggs dramatic futile stand and sensationalized medical treatment propelled the story into Deutschlands public consciousness, even as Briggs was reportedly losing his after the fight.

I am nointellectual experton thegeneral German psyche, but I have observed a unique, uniform pridein the ability to swallow bitter things with stoic resolve, be they (by USA standards) rigid social contracts or bizzaro traffic etiquette. The audience of around 14,500 at O2 Arena deeply appreciated the resolve Briggs showed as Klitschko basically dropped the building on him but couldnt drop Briggs.

Broadcasting RTL network reported 15 million viewers, with a market share of 66.9%.

He was very brave and never gave up, understated Klitschko.

Briggs gained the crowds respect eating right hands.His postfightaddress made him a beloved part of theadopted national family.

I fought George Foreman, I fought Lennox Lewis. Vitali is the best Ive fought. Ive been hit by Foreman, and Vitali hits harder, said Briggs with a face that swelled as he spoke. I just want to say to all the people of Hamburg that although I was fighting their champion, everybody treated me with respect. All the people in the city were great, all the people at K2, even the chef. I love Germany and I hope I get to come backhere some day.

Briggs may get the key to the city before somebodydemonstrates the key to giving Klitschko a real fight.

By the time news dispatches fromsponsoringRTL had spread internationally, data on Briggs injuries got blurred in mis-translation. The security guard who escorted Briggs from the ring said the fighter was disoriented and stumbling, and Briggs reportedly collapsed while waiting for a urine test. Other unverified scuttlebutt said Briggs tried to refuse medical treatment but was forced by his promoter Greg Cohen to hit the hospital. Good, if obvious call.

There was quickly growing outrage over Briggss widely perceived lack of proper protection. Somewhere, his last second highlight reel stoppage of Sergei Liakovich probablygot playeda bit too much.

This fight should never have gone even ten rounds, said commentator and semi-active heavyweight Luan Krasniq.

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Ringside doctor Stephan Bock told RTL that he would have recommended the fight be stopped, but nobody ever asked him. After the fight Briggs pupil reflexes were fine, but he was drowsy, indicated Bock.

Klitschkos trainer Fritz Sdunek said the words everybody feared, Briggs will never be the same after this.

Perhaps, in light of various personalities and subjective issues, boxing should take away the human factor in what decides a technical stoppage and switch to a numeric or statistic based model.

Instead of leaving it up to hopefully well informed and intended but often inconsistent players like referees, doctors and corner men, let the numbers make the call. Similar to a 10 run baseball rule or 11-zip racquetball shutout, fights could have a designated boxers dozen, in which an 8 count is delivered if one guy gets hit flush more than 10 times in a row without landing anything back at all.

Or, in a case like Briggs totally awesome, totally unnecessary display of durability against Klitschko, something along the lines of if a guys head gets spun 160 degrees while his face looks like putty and his counterpunches miss by more than a foot, and this occurs ten consecutive times a round in round after round, then for Heavens sake pull the plug kind of rule.

Johannes Brahms is one of this citys most famous sons, and the musical theme for tonights easily translatable Das Deull der Knockouter was who could really deliver the lullaby. Klitschko landed thuds that looked and sounded gigantic, but Briggs heart for the task was equally big and somehow kept him upright, though often dazed and wobbly, for the 12 round duration.

There will doubtlessly be many a wise guy who says Klitschkos monotonous whomping of Briggs put them to sleep, and US viewers may never wake up to Klitschkos style.

Not so the O2 Arena, where the place kept rocking with cheers, chants and collective gasps at Briggs endurance that gained affection from a satisfied audience who watched him pay the price for plenty of prefight howling hype. It wasnt a good boxing match, but it was riveting theatre until around the middle frames when the outcome became obvious.

Klitschko probed with straight lefts and scored with the first big right he threw. Briggs smiled, but soon his left eye blinked with the look of a guy who knew it would be a long evening. Briggs huffed and puffed and briefly got on his toes, but Klitschko kept a disciplined drumbeat of short rights into Briggs tenderized countenance.

There was a reality check type moment in the fourth frame during a lull in crowd noise. The fighters landed resounding, simultaneous shots that clearly illustrated the kind of painful pops presented inside the strands. Nobody looked anxious to trade places with either principal. Briggs managed to put some welts on Klitschkos torso with surprisingly fast body shots, but for the most part it was all Klitschko from the sixth frame on. By then, Briggs had earned his paycheck while Klitschko had already landed enough right hand mallets to flatten many

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contenders.

Klitschko threw very few body shots, but he didn't need to. Kill the head and the body will die. Unless it's Shannon Briggs.

By the seventh it wasn't really a fight any more. Klitschko landed multiple, varied combinations as Briggs felt fury from all angles. The crowd stomped their feet and chanted in anticipation of a knockout that never came.

It was surprising that Briggs lasted through the eighth and shocking that he lasted through every round after that, but you could see in Briggs's puffy eyes that he was willing himself to continue. Now the real drama began. Everybody in the place except maybe Briggs knew who would win the bout, but nobody could tell whether he'd actually go the distance, which still seemed almost impossible as Klitschko blasted him senseless in the tenth and it became a slaughter. Howard Cosell spun in his grave.

Briggs reeled and rocked, then trudged back for more even though he could barely face his foe. Klitschko walloped him around the ring but could never back him into the ropes, let alone put him down.

When the bell rang ending round eleven, Briggs, who dragged badly for much of the recent evening, got a bright, wide-eyed look as if to say, Hey, I made it.

Not quite yet. Briggs still had to weather even more serious trouble in the 12th, but somehow he took blast after blast without dropping. I don't know if it was a moral victory or not, but it sure was amazing to see.

Klitschko raised his arms and shrugged in acknowledging his frustration at failing to stop Briggs. Many fans cheered not the obvious shutout, but Briggs's gutsy survival.

Other performers who logged Hamburg incubation time are The Beatles. Insert song titles like A Hard Day's Night for your personal gag about Klitschko's widespread victory. What it really came down to was Help.

Guido Caravalleri and Victor Cervantes scored the bout 120-107, with Anek Hongtongkam logging 120-105. That's quite a few 10-8 tabs without a knockdown, and quite justifiable. They might as well have scored the final sessions 10-0.

What's not so justifiable, hindsight or not, is why Briggs didn't either go for broke or call it a dutiful day much earlier, torn biceps notwithstanding. In Vegas you might think of high stakes over/under betting considerations, but that doesn't seem to be a factor here.

I wanted to knock him out and I'm disappointed I did not, but he deserves a lot of respect, mused Klitschko. I couldn't believe he was still standing after some of the punches. I almost got discouraged.

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Charlemagne's forces established Hamburg around the year 800 AD. What is probably Germany's most diverse, funky metropolis has since seen eras of sacking, plagues, and catastrophic blazes. It has also risen and remained one of Europe's both most well to do and gritty domains. Hamburg is said to have by the country's highest per-capita population of millionaires by far, and it looked to me like home for most of the land's freaks and street people. K2 events feature elaborate video introductions and tonight Klitschko's highlighted his family life and training around various city landmarks.

The crowd ate it up so much he should probably try to run for office here instead of the Ukraine.

Klitschko had his pro debut in Hamburg, and keeps a residence here. He's endured some setback injuries, defeats, and a still present public skepticism in some quarters including the dominant US market. That never stopped Klitschko from widespread personal achievements and still growing acclaim and fortune.

Haters complain that since the K-bros have cleaned out the division and won't fight each other, there's almost no point to many of the fights. You could say that about much of tonight's affair, but by the conclusion there was a twisted beauty to Briggs' refusal to fold.

Anybody can be a hero when it's easy. Trash proclaims itself legendary after minor endeavors all the time.

It is immeasurably harder and usually more costly, in abstract nobility, to achieve heroism with the short end of the whipping stick.

There are many legitimate, contradicting perceptions about the Klitschko - Briggs battle but a couple things were undisputable. One is Klitschko looked formidable and creamed Briggs so badly that stopping the fight should have been a much more pending option in terms of future health.

Another is how Briggs overwhelmingly earned the esteem of the highly partisan swarm. He had played the formidable foil in grand style throughout the promotion and by the time his gigantic, dramatically enhanced image blared across a darkened arena during his introduction Briggs was a perfect dragon for Klitschko to slay. At the end of the contest, he had earned the crowd's uniformly heartfelt admiration. You could almost say he stole the show.

By the end of the night Briggs was the guy Germany talked about, with good wishes in their hearts.