

## Pulling A Fork Out of the Super Six

Written by Phil Woolever

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MONACOORHELKINKIOR BUST - Just a few weeks back, the Super Six tournament was in danger of becoming a well intentioned disaster zone. Now there's light at the end of the tournament tunnel. What a difference a day and a few Glen Johnson hooks make. Johnson provided jump start revitalization with a knockout the tournament was sorely in need of after recent repeated disappointments and cancellations. Now, with some class acts returning to the square stage this weekend, Showtime and optimistic fans may get a well deserved rumbling reward.

After each initial Super Six entrant posed for the introductory photo ops it didn't take long for promotional interests to clog things up. Simple math mashing provided a discouraging indication of just how hungry, dedicated or fan friendly the participants and their patrons really were.

Between inevitable unforeseen injuries and questionable posturing it almost looked like pulling the plug would be a merciful and logical, if unsatisfying, conclusion.

Showtime may have had too much good faith in the beginning. That doesn't mean it won't be rewarded. It looks quite possible that the tournament will heat up again like a Finnish sauna amidst a frozen landscape.

There's more good news. Unless somebody slides into the skids on Helsinki ice, it looks like Arthur Abraham and Carl Froch are actually going to fight for the WBC belt. With that meeting the Super Six has an engagement that should be a candidate for Fight of the Year.

There's even icing on the conking cake as tournament leader Andre Ward meets Sakio Bika in a WBA title fight. Bika will have to up his game to make his fight as competitive as things on the Baltic coast look to get.

Meanwhile, the debate about whether or not Johnson is equal to Andre Dirrell or Mikkel Kessler became moot as they ended up with problems beyond their control and were forced to withdraw. Johnson was a positive replacement, quite possibly a gain.

Ward, through charismatic class and clean personality, had emerged as the sentimental favorite and gold standard. That hasn't changed.

In Johnson's case a combination of earnest work ethic and history of class while performing at an elite level means it's quite possible Johnson enjoyed even more of a fan base than any of the original Super Six already. Immediate feedback seemed heavily favorable toward his performance, and he tied Abraham for points.

Johnson and Ward have nailed down a spot but who they face in the next bracket is interesting and probably not easy to call.

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Ill plead complete ignorance, even insanity, regarding the likelihoods and logics of leather when it comes to Showtimes super-middleweight extravaganza. The two guys I picked prior to the brackets openings (Kessler and Jermain Taylor) were both gone before the second stage.

The Super Six was supposed to eliminate any questions but for a while it looked like the high road of hope might get flooded by the sewer of reality. Then along came Johnson and suddenly things were back on track.

As always, odds are it wont stay that way.

From now on, contrary to what its looked like so far, promoters should show extragood faith and give some concessions for the benefit of the game. If anyone wants to call themselves super, they should act like it. That way, as intended, the tourneys seeding will eventually determine the proper champion.

Best against the best. Last man standing. Whoever survives the Super six gauntlet has an undisputable, legitimate claim to 168 pound honors.

As they say after learning the ropes: knot.

Declaring a champion in 2011 doesnt have to mean the end of the line for the 168 pound tournament jousting.

Lucian Butes signing with Showtime could be seen as both a conclusive effort to include all of the very best 168 pounders in the current landscape, and it serves as insurance for a virtual monopoly on the division no matter what happens in the tourney. Bute has fought just as much as any one in the tourneysince the Super Six kicked off.

Sergio Martinez earned something to say if he decides to move up. Maybe he and Bute could fight to see who gets the Super Six winner, though its been highly mumbled that Kessler has that shot guaranteed upon his return.

If Kessler returns, that is.

It seems the nature of the 168 pound tournament beast holds as many questions as answers.

So, now for this weekends picks. One is seemingly obvious, one is like the old two-headed coin flip trick, but whose head gets spun?

Ward should pitch a shutout against Bika, who could claim the upset of the year with a surprise.

Froch TKO 9 Abraham. It seems Froch was very wise to postpone meeting Abraham for almost eight weeks. Whether or not Frochs back injury was a justifiable reason, the vibe has shifted toward him. Unless Abraham shows he can adapt his technique to more boxing and less slugging, hes going to go from one of the favorites to must win circumstances.

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Whoever comes out ahead in Helsinki and Oakland Saturday night, the Super Six looks like a winning circumstance once again.