Written by Rick Folstad
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A guy with a nickname like “Fast Eddie,“ should be hanging around pool halls, poker parlors and race tracks. He should have a toothpick in his mouth, a race form in his hands and he should be telling you what horse to bet on in the third at Pimlico. Wink, wink.

But Fast Eddie Chambers isn’t a pool hustler and he doesn‘t make his living betting on horses. He’s a heavyweight contender getting ready to fight for the heavyweight championship of the world. Not too many guys named Fast Eddie have done that.

The thing about Fast Eddie is, he doesn’t usually send guys reeling into the ropes or stumbling back to their stools. He’s more sleight of hand than hammer. More sting than clobber. He doesn’t throw crippling left hooks or “lights out” right hands. He’s the guy voted most likely to become a card shark.

Yeah, Fast Eddie. Fits.

If you watch Fast Eddie fight, don’t look for any haymakers. Look for a guy who slips inside, does his work and slips back out. He’s a bob-and-weave guy, tougher to catch than a knuckleball, slipperier than fresh ice. If you have to fight him, all you need to worry about is how to slow him down or how to make yourself invisible.

“You know how people say I can’t punch? Well, speed is power,” said Chambers. “I’m a lot stronger than people believe.”

Speed and power might play an important role in Chambers’ immediate future. He’s scheduled to fight IBF/WBO heavyweight champ Wladimir Klitschko (53-3, 47 KOs) on March 20 in Dusseldorf, Germany. They’re expecting a gate of about, oh, 50,000, give or take a small city.

“I want to fight the best fighter in the world and for me right now, that’s Wladimir,” said Chambers, who was born in Pittsburgh but fights out of Philadelphia. “I predict a victory for me, obviously. I’m not putting the champ down, but it’s going to be my title in some way.“

Hand and foot speed are what make Chambers a contender. He pretty much lives and dies by it. They probably gave him the nickname when they put him in the ring and discovered his hands were quicker than most New York City pickpockets. And about as dangerous.

Half of Eddie’s fights have gone the distance, which aren‘t exactly Mike Tyson numbers. He goes into a fight expecting a long night and he usually gets one. But you know he‘s in shape for that same reason.

At 6-foot-1 and maybe 210 pounds, Chambers is a small heavyweight in the same way Joe Louis was small and Evander Holyfield is small. Worked fine for them. And like he says, speed is power. And he says he’s a lot stronger than most people think he is.

“The speed is what really gets them,” said Chambers. “The punching power is there. It’s hard to believe I can punch as hard as I can at the smaller weight, but when that punch comes at the velocity it’s coming - when those things land - it’s going to hurt you. Holyfield was knocking guys out at 208. So was Tyson at 214 and Ali before him at 211.”

So far, Fast Eddie has done pretty well with his size. He’s 35-1 with 18 KOs, that one loss a disappointing decision to Alexander Povetkin in January 2008. The fight was in Berlin, Germany and Fast Eddie will stand up and take full blame for the loss.

“I was a little heavier (for the fight) than I should have been, which was my fault,“ he said. “I gave that fight away.“

He’s been scrooge-like since, winning five in a row, including big wins over top contender Samuel Peter in Los Angeles last March and Alexander Dimitrenko in Hamburg, Germany in July. And like Klitschko, Dimitrenko is a very big guy.

“That fight (with Dimitrenko) was a doozy,“ Chambers said. “I had to go back to Germany where I lost once, to fight a guy with almost the same name as the guy I fought before (and lost to). I had to go over there and dominate.”

Now he has to go to Germany again. He’s 1-1 there. This is his tiebreaker.

“Dimitrenko was the perfect guy for me to fight before I fight Wladimir Klitschko,“ he said. “I‘m not going to say I‘ll knock (Klitschko) out, I’m just saying I’ll win.“

In case you haven’t figured it out yet, Chambers sounds like a nice guy. But can he fight at the top level of the heavyweight division? He‘s done pretty well so for.

Just how good is “Fast” Eddie?

“We’ve got ourselves a real threat in the heavyweight division to become a world champion,” said Chambers’ promoter, Dan Goossen. “And I don‘t care who the champ is or how big they are. Eddie showed he could be a giant killer.“

At 6-foot-7 and 257 pounds, Dimitrenko might not be a giant, but he sure looks like something out of a fairy tale involving a beanstalk.

“There are a lot of things uphill for me,” said Chambers about fighting in Germany again against another big guy. “Klitschko is 6-foot-6 and he‘s strong. But I‘m pretty strong myself.”

And fast.