

Arreola-Adamek: Like The Way It Used To Be

Written by Frank Lotierzo

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It used to be in the heavyweight division a fighter had to beat a few contenders ranked above him in order to get a shot at the title. In 1973 perennial contender Jerry Quarry had to beat Ron Lyle in February and Earnie Shavers in December, just to earn his way into a title elimination bout with Joe Frazier in June of 1974. All Quarry had to do was get by Frazier and he was guaranteed a title bout with the winner of the upcoming Foreman-Ali championship fight. Imagine that, a fighter had to beat three contenders to merit a shot at the world champion.

Quarry's path to a title shot was more the rule than it was the exception for most heavyweight contenders through the late seventies. Then it changed during the Larry Holmes title era. To get a shot at Holmes, basically a heavyweight on the way up just had to go unbeaten in his first 15/20 fights. They seldom had to beat any contenders ranked above them. Win a couple main events on network TV on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon and you'd get a shot at Holmes on a Friday or Saturday night on HBO shortly thereafter.

The path to one of the alphabet titles in the heavyweight division is no different now than it was 30 years ago. And that's what makes the April 24th Arreola-Adamek heavyweight bout unique by today's standard. Adamek, 40-1 (27) the former IBF cruiserweight champ, has only fought twice as a heavyweight. But he's a name fighter and could probably merit a shot at one of the alphabet title belts by just posting a few wins over a couple fighters who wouldn't offer much resistance. Instead he's agreed to fight one of the bigger punchers in the division who's shown he's more than willing to let his hands go against any heavyweight in front of him not named Vitali Klitschko.

A win by Adamek will assuredly propel him into a title bout in his next fight. However, Tomasz isn't the hardest guy around to hit and against Arreola he could be one punch away from having to go to the back of the line and working his way back up. I'm not sure Adamek fighting Arreola is the smartest move for him from a business vantage-point at this time, but he must be praised for being the real fighter that he is. And his management by taking this fight is showing that they have the utmost confidence in him.

His opponent Cris Arreola 28-1 (25) is also showing that he's for real and willing to fight his way back to another title shot after being stopped by Vitali Klitschko in his only title shot last year. With a dearth of upper-tier heavyweights campaigning in 2010, it would be easy for Arreola to get another title shot by compiling a few wins over a couple journeymen with half a name. Instead he's chosen to take on a hungry and tough fighter the likes of Adamek. And that's why boxing fans will no doubt be treated to an exciting fight as long as it lasts.

"I wanna come in at 240," Arreola said. "240 is easy. That's my target weight. That's where I really do belong. Boxing any higher than that and I'm kicking myself in the ass. There is no excuse why I shouldn't come in at that weight."

Arreola always sounds great when discussing what he'll weigh for his next fight. However, Cris

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has only weighed less than 240 in one of his last eight fights. He says he's in the 270s now and was a flabby 261 for his last fight when he stopped Brian Minto in four rounds in December of last year.

"Tomasz comes up from cruiserweight and he fights at around 225. And he's a very agile guy. He's gonna be on his toes a lot. So, I'm gonna have to try and keep up with him because I'm gonna have to chase him. I guarantee he is not going to stand there and bang and I'm going to have to chase him around," Arreola said. "But I'm going to chase him around smartly."

Adamek responded. "I will not run from Arreola. I will be easy to find in the ring, if he wants to find me. Why should I exchange punches with Chris, when I can make him miss, and then hit him? Whatever works for me on that day I will do. I think in the ring I will change tactics, I'll see what's gives me the greatest advantage during the fight."

From what we've seen of Arreola and Adamek during their careers, they don't participate in many bad fights. Both fighters are risking a lot by facing each other. A loss by either will cost them what would almost be an automatic title shot before the end of this year. But most likely the loser will have endeared himself to the fans because they'll have gotten their money's worth out of the fight.

That's the way it used to be in the heavyweight division. Two top contenders facing each other with the title and money on the line. Then on fight night both guys fight to win instead of waiting for the other fighter to make a mistake and trying to run the clock out.

Neither Cris Arreola or Tomasz Adamek are going to be thought of as all-time greats when they retire, so what. At least they'll attempt to deliver a good heavyweight fight, which is all that anyone can ask for. The winner gets a title shot and the loser will have to wait a little longer before he gets his. But most likely the fans will be looking forward to seeing him fight again. And that's because above all else, fans respect the fighters most who routinely face the best opposition available...just as long as they give them their money's worth and don't mail it in.

It's doubtful that Arreola or Adamek will mail it in. Both guys deserve high praise for fighting the best available contender just as Eddie Chambers has done in his last few fights. Hopefully it'll catch on and we'll see more of the same from the other top heavyweights in near future.

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