

Klitschkos & Heavyweight Stranglehold

Written by David A. Avila
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No other weight division in professional boxing is in as thick of a mess as the much ballyhooed and nothing to do heavyweight division.

The big boys just aren't doing it.

Because Wladimir and Vitali Klitschko hold three of the major world titles the division has sunk into a virtual debutante façade where the brothers are eager to fight in Europe against fellow Europeans or inexperienced Americans.

They've fooled the entire world the past several years.

Young Wladimir Klitschko has Eddie Chambers in front of him in a fight scheduled for next week. That's actually a step up from his brother. Years ago it was Vitali who was challenging all comers, now it's Wladimir.

What happened?

I remember when Vitali was hungry and chasing then world champion Lennox Lewis. He chased and chased and through a stroke of luck when an opponent fell out there was Vitali to step in. That fight was one of the best heavyweight bouts in the last 20 years.

Since that day in 2003 the elder Klitschko has evaded two Americans in particular while fighting carefully selected victims. One of the Americans he avoided was Evander Holyfield and the other James Toney.

Now readers are going to say those guys are irrelevant. But we're talking about the last 10 years not just this year and last year. Basically the Klitschkos have run away from challenges much like Vitali did against Chris Arreola when they fought. Yes, he won the fight. But I don't ever remember him fighting that way against any other fighter.

"I've been chasing the Klitschkos too long," said Toney by telephone. "Everybody says they can kick my butt so why don't they fight me then?"

That makes sense. You would think if a fighter knew he could win easily and make more money than fighting a relatively unknown heavyweight it would be an easy choice. Remember. This has been going on for almost 10 years.

Maybe I'm picking on Vitali too much, but I have my reasons. When he fought Lewis at the Staples Center with more grit and guts than I had seen since Holyfield and Riddick Bowe's collisions, it made me a big proponent of the big Ukrainian. He was a crowd pleaser. He's no longer that hungry fighter. He wants the easy fights now.

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Let's look at Wladimir.

First, he has Emanuel Steward training him and the veteran trainer told me way back that someone like Toney was too dangerous. That must be the case because when Toney battered Hasim Rahman in July 2008 it must have really substantiated what Steward had always said: "James Toney is too dangerous."

Sure enough, five months after Toney beat up on Rahman, it was Rahman who was chosen by Wladimir Klitschko to fight.

Of the two brothers it has been Wladimir who is taking more challenges especially in fighting Chambers on March 20.

"We got Eddie Chambers fighting Wladimir and if he wins it opens up a whole new horizon for Manny Quezada and some of our other heavyweights," said Dan Goossen, president of Goossen-Tutor Promotions who has Toney, Arreola, Quezada and Chambers.

Wladimir Klitschko has fought Ruslan Chagaev, Sultan Ibragimov and Lamont Brewster to name a few. Those names aren't familiar unless you're a die hard boxing fan, but all are experienced former world champions. Chagaev was a world champion when they fought.

Both brothers could have and still could pump life into the heavyweight division if they choose. They won't fight each other so why not fight the fights that are dangerous? There is still time. In May big brother Vitali Klitschko is fighting Albert Sosnowski in Germany.

Who is Sosnowski?

He's the guy who lost to Zuri Lawrence in 2008.