

Helenius Hijacks Helsinki Hoopla

Written by Phil Woolever

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NORDIC EXPOSURE -The primary boxing stories dispatched out of Helsinki from the biggest networks last weekend concerned how masterfully Carl Froch dispatched Arthur Abraham.

Around the Baltic coast however, the real story was emerging heavyweight contender Robert Helenius, 14-0 (9) of Finland. Helenius, the Nordic Nightmare blasted out decently experienced Attila Levin in the 2nd session of their Euro belt encounter.

Helenius stole the Super Six show with a big performance against a big foe who may have lacked true world class skills but still looked formidable. Call gigantic but soft spoken Helenius the Super six foot and a half.

Helenius still adheres to that old philosophy in which one prefers that their actions speak for themselves. Maybe that has something to do with why fans around an expanding radius in central Europe are mentioning the name Helenius more and more as a rising star.

Helenius has already grown into quite a local celebrity in these parts. Although a large percentage of the people in Hartwall Arena took extended smoke breaks and chose to watch on concourse monitors during other Finnish fighters matches. When Helenius made his way to the ring most patrons scurried into the buildings cave like coreso there were over 5,500 watching, and they were more boisterous than when the crowd grew to approximately 7,007 for the main event an hour later.

The faithful didn't have to wait long for another intermission puff. Considering Finland's uneasy history with Levin's homeland Sweden, there was probably some easily exaggerated hype about the rivalry. The pair both appeared entirely professional during weigh-in proceedings at central Helsinki's well known club The Tiger, where it was nice to see four round fighters get a chance to chill on velvet roped-off, rooftop sofa type table areas usually known for catering to famous lounge lizards with names like Paris.

One of Helenius's few apparent concerns that day was bumping his head on the faux tree branches that hung as decorations over the booths. Levin, 34-4 (27), showed up in shape and dropped a heavy limb or two on Helenius the next evening, but any well laid plans of deterring Helenius's looming assault definitely never got a chance to branch out. Tim-ber.

Round one was tentative as the fighters tested each other's strength behind respectable trades.

At 65 Levin wasn't really shorter than Helenius. Levin attempted to advance quickly behind multiple inside shots and scored the first punches up and down, but Helenius stayed consistent with a deceiving outside jab then chopped to the ribs with both hands.

In the second session Helenius calmly marched in behind strong, straight armed crosses and dropped his willing but outgunned opponent with a bright counter after Levin landed a big lead

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of his own. Levin managed to connect with another solid shot as Helenius charged back in to finish it, but if Helenius felt the desperate leather he sure didn't show it. Helenius soon drove him back into the ropes. Levin staggered and dazed and when Helenius landed a pair of finishing rights to the chin and ear the pounding was waved off.

Levin or his seconds didn't protest the stoppage, and he still looked dazed for minutes afterward. The crowd clapped and stomped their snow boots in unison as the time of 1:20 was announced.

Besides convincing Levin, Helenius made a further impression on both fellow fighters and fans. After a brief holiday break, Helenius looks to be back in action by springtime.

Boxing is still a very popular, major TV sport throughout much of Europe, and there were broadcasting crews filming throughout the arena as if they were cruise ships floating throughout the arena as if they were cruise ships floating into the heavily trafficked bay nearby.

I got a really good reception from the people here, said a low key Helenius in improving English after the fight as he signed ticket stubs and programs for food stand workers, security guards and a few fans that loitered with hopes of a glimpse. That was really nice. I thought the first round was not easy, but in the second round I noticed that he has got no guard in the left hand and my right hand was perfect to come over the opening.

As you can see, he needs to fight with more confidence, which he did in the second round, said trainer Ulli Wegner. I am pleased with this performance. After more training we will get even closer to our goals, when we fight for a heavyweight world championship. Today was a step in the right direction.

I've watched Robert getting better fight after fight, I think he throws one of the biggest right hands of all heavyweights these days, said promoter Wilfred Sauerland. I've never seen anybody knocking people down like this with one single punch. He still needs some time, he's just 26. But I think in couple years he will be right at the top of the division and I think he can achieve his big goal.

In this context, fringe is defined as ready to break into the top twenty. A big step up means a match against somebody most reasonable observers would agree is not too far removed from the top ten.

Who belongs where in the rankings is an ongoing debate, but almost every non-partisan party lists the Klitschkos alone at the top, with a universal need for more new blood than a Twilight Twitterfest.

There is nothing light-handed about Helenius, as he proved again last August in Erfurt, Germany with an efficient imploding of Gregory Tony. The win got Helenius one of those EU title belts, but mainly it got him more experience against a rugged foe who came to fight.

Speculation on who will be the next legitimate challenger carried on more and more as

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semi-contenders clash. Most of those have been eliminated or reckon they would be, so they bide time until maybe a Klitschko gets elected or injured. Meanwhile some keep fighting amongst themselves, ulterior motives on their ring robe sleeves.

You might not be familiar with the name Robert Helenius, but hes probably going to change that. Helenius biggest victory remains the 8th round TKO over Lamon Brewster that derailed Brewsters comeback last January. Yes it could be alleged that Sauerland promotions signed Brewster knowing hed make a decent notch on Helenius resume. You could even pretend they put something in Brewsters water.

The truth is that something does get put into Helenius extra large gloves, mainly honest knockout power.

Despite Tomasz Adamek earning most of the good, realistic press lately and David Haye blabbing on and on about becoming the next big thing, Helenius could be laying the groundwork for the most serious assault on the Klitschko empire. In the wide regional scope of German television, Helenius has moved toward the front of the European pack. Thats where the action is above 200 pounds, and if his rise continues Helenius could emerge as a gloved up global factor.

It doesnt seem likely Haye will ever fight Helenius unless he absolutely has to, since Helenius will probably never be a worthwhile risk/reward.

It figures that unless Adamek gets shocked by Vinnie Maddalone, he and the winner of Odlanier Solis versus Ray Austin will move to the front of the Klitschko sweepstakes.

The most logical, easy to make match with considerable subsequent contender status attached is against the winner of the Alexander Dimitrenko- Albert Sosnowski bout this weekend.

Helenius has at least an even shot against any those potential title challengers.

If you can get any decent odds on Helenius against the likes of Denis Boytsov or Cristobal Arreola it wouldnt be the worst play to make.

Facing off against almost every other heavyweight except the very best, meaning the Klitschkos, Helenius is positioning himself as a favorite with audiences and odds.