

Klitschko-Chisora: Sucker Slap

Written by Thomas Hauser
Sunday, 19 February 2012 22:50



In the past, I've referred to the fighter staredowns at weigh-ins as "a publicity-seeking ritual that has become an idiotic incendiary part of boxing." The truth of that critique was on display yet again at the February 17th weigh-in for Vitali Klitschko vs. Dereck Chisora.

Chisora had been chosen as the challenger for Klitschko's WBC heavyweight crown on the basis of his coming out on the short end of an atrocious decision against Robert Helenius last December.

A loss, however unfair the verdict, is not a sterling credential for a title fight. A loss to Helenius is worse. As Carlos Acevedo observes, "Helenius has just enough speed and coordination to rise from his stool before his cornerman pulls it out from under him. He's as mobile as a stalactite and looks like he could be chased out of a bar by Chuck Wepner."

As for Chisora, Acevedo references him as "the only passenger on his own personal Crazy Train" and "a vulgar non-sportsman with little talent and lots of mouthiness." Acevedo then notes for the record, "Over the last couple of years, Chisora has bitten a fighter in the ring, kissed one at a weigh-in, and been found guilty of assaulting his ex-girlfriend."

At the weigh-in for Klitschko-Chisora, Dereck disgraced himself by slapping Vitali during the staredown. That breach of decency threatened the physical well-being of everyone within shoving distance.

Then WBC president Jose Sulaiman got into the act, announcing that the WBC would fine

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Chisora \$50,000 and declaring, “This is definitely a lack of respect for the sport and completely unacceptable. He’s no gentleman at all, and he’s failed in what we expect of boxers.”

Sulaiman’s outrage would be more convincing were it not for his own past history. After Floyd Mayweather Jr was found criminally guilty of beating up a woman for the third time, the WBC president said that Mayweather should not be stripped of his WBC title and proclaimed, “Beating a lady is highly critical, [but] it is not a major sin or crime.”

Stung by the widespread negative reaction to his remarks, Sulaiman then issued a “clarification” which read in part, “I am a devoted husband and father of two daughters, and have three wonderful granddaughters, as well. The Virgin of Guadalupe is my superior saint. I just meant to say that I know Floyd Mayweather personally, and I know that he’s a good human being with a good heart. I just wanted Floyd to know that the WBC will always stay strongly in his corner.”

Apparently, Sulaiman believes that slapping a 6-foot-7-inch 243-pound fighter is a more egregious act than beating a women in front of her children.

As for the \$50,000 fine; Sulaiman said that fifty percent of the money would go to an unnamed children’s charity in Germany and the other fifty percent to World Boxing Cares.

There’s considerable doubt as to whether the WBC has the authority to levy and collect a fine of this nature.

Also, it’s worth noting that World Boxing Cares is a boxing-related charity that does some good work but is also a de facto public relations arm of the WBC. World Boxing Cares chairperson Jill Diamond is identified on the organization’s website as a “media representative” for the World Boxing Council and chairperson of the WBC and NABF women’s divisions. Speaking on behalf of the WBC at the kick-off press conference for Floyd Mayweather Jr vs Shane Mosley last June, Ms. Diamond declared that Mayweather “bleeds green” but has “a heart of gold.”

A more appropriate punitive measure against Chisora would have been for the WBC to withdraw its recognition of him as a valid challenger and hence its sanction of Klitschko-Chisora.

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But that would have cost the organization a sanctioning fee.

When fight night for Klitschko vs. Chisora arrived, dressing room antics delayed Dereck's ring entrance by twenty minutes. Once in the ring, he spat water in Wladimir Klitschko's face.

Then, to the surprise of many, Chisora waged a credible fight.

Vitali isn't a counter-puncher. The best way to neutralize his power is by throwing punches. Also, Klitschko likes to fight at a distance. The best way for an opponent to get inside is to punch his way in.

Chisora threw punches throughout the night, forcing Vitali out of his comfort zone. He aimed for every legal body part that he could hit. One of his blows may well have damaged Klitschko's left shoulder, inasmuch as Vitali seldom threw his jab with authority during the latter stages of the fight. Each man showed a good chin.

"It's never easy in a fight," Klitschko has said.

That was particularly true this time. This observer scored the bout 116-112 in Vitali's favor. The official judges were more pro-Klitschko, rendering a 119-109, 118-110, 118-110 verdict.

Chisora fought like a professional fighter. It's too bad that he didn't act like one before the bout.

It should be further noted that, at the post-fight press conference, Dereck appeared to initiate an ugly brawl with David Haye (who was shooting off his mouth in obnoxious fashion). Several people were injured in the chaos that followed. Criminal charges might be in order.

The British Board of Boxing Control has jurisdiction over Chisora. A lengthy suspension and

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license review in England would be appropriate.

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Two weeks ago, I wrote an article for The Sweet Science entitled “Bad Judging: A Case Study”. The article referenced Ruben Garcia’s absurd 115-112 scorecard favoring Wilfredo Vazquez Jr over Nonito Donaire in San Antonio and posited, “No doubt, some people are saying today, ‘What’s the big deal? It doesn’t matter. The other two judges got it right.’ Trust me. It’s a big deal. Suppose Donaire-Vazquez had been close, with [the other two judges splitting their vote]. Garcia would have cast the deciding ballot.”

I told you so.

On Saturday night, Gabriel Campillo got robbed in Corpus Christi.

Campillo survived two first-round knockdowns at the hands of Tavoris Cloud, fought his way back into the fight, and appeared to have won the IBF 175-pound title. This writer scored the bout 114-112 in Campillo’s favor. Judge Denny Nelson had it 115-111. Joel Elizondo raised eyebrows with a 114-112 scorecard favoring Cloud.

Then came the shocker.

David Robertson scored the bout 116-110 for Cloud.

That led Showtime analyst Al Bernstein to declare, “How he could have arrived at a 116-110 scorecard is beyond my comprehension.”

Bernstein was being polite. I can think of several ways that Robertson arrived at his verdict,

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none of them pretty.

Elizondo's scorecard was an embarrassment. Robertson's was worse. Bernstein noted that, prior to Cloud-Campillo, Elizondo and Robertson had judged only one world title fight between them. Robertson shouldn't judge another.

Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thausen@rcn.com. His most recent book (Winks and Daggers: An Inside Look at Another Year in Boxing) was published by the University of Arkansas Press.

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gibola says:

As a British boxing fan I'm stunned and saddened by the events of Saturday night. Chisora should not have slapped Vitali, he shouldn't have spat the water at Wlad and he shouldn't have got out of his chair and confronted Haye. To my mind Haye was there doing his usual mouthy act but Chisora doesn't get it is just part of the business and initiated something that he couldn't control. Haye may be a pain but he's done this plenty of times without fisticuffs, Chisora is a loose cannon who needs reigning in by the British Boxing Board.

Other random thoughts:

- It's no excuse whatsoever for Chisora's behaviour, but Wlad - who twice cancelled fights with Chisora - made Chisora re-wrap his hands and exchanged verbals while 'observing' in the Chisora dressing room. It has been alleged Wlad was laughing at Chisora in the dressing room. Then when Chisora gets in the ring Wlad wants to stand right in front of him grinning, Chisora reacted - quite wrongly - but he reacted with the water spitting.

The K Bros are a credit to boxing in many ways but perhaps Wlad should stay out of the way of heavyweights he could already have fought (or could fight in the future) in the minutes before they go into the ring against his brother? Just a thought. The Ks are wonderful human beings in many ways but they are no angels.

-The fight itself was very revealing. An in-shape Chisora gave Vitali a much harder fight than the much hyped Adamek or Sam Peter. Chisora (inside the ring) is a potential champion when the Ks retire. With a tad more experience Chisora could perhaps be the man to dethrone one of them. His aggressive style, and Frazier-like head movement, is a real challenge to the 6'7" monsters and his chin, confidence and stamina make him a rarity in today's field of flawed big men.

-Vitali is on the wane and may only have a few fights left. Yes, I said it. He was slower than 18

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months ago, he didn't seem as powerful and he seemed lacking in stamina. It won't be easy but he is there to be beaten now, but who is good enough to do it? Not Arreola, Thompson or Adamek and I still think he'd take the overrated Povetkin. The poor quality of the division may allow him to survive a while longer but the end is nigh.

-British prospect Tyson Fury controlled an admittedly out-of-shape Chisora with relative ease last year. If (and it's a big IF) Fury could focus on his fitness and work on his skills over the next year perhaps he could take Vitali. Sadly the fact that these days you can't presume a heavyweight prospect will weigh in at less 280lbs and commit to his career says it all about the division. But Fury has more potential than anyone else out there.

mortcola says:

Good comments, Gib. As far as Vitali's physical wherewithal, keep in mind that he fought the last 8 rounds with a torn shoulder ligament, and still threw over six hundred punches, all right hands from various angles. The stress of fighting and defending with a major injury, and fighting with only one of your weapons (not the one that keeps the bull at a distance) makes for a much more grueling fight.

DaveB says:

I feel that Chisora hurt himself with his antics. If all the unsportsmanlike actions had not occurred every one or most anyway would be heralding the spirited way he fought in the ring. Today most are talking about what actions should be taken against him up to and including criminal charges. I felt that he did a really good job in the ring and now most of that will go unappreciated and is being overshadowed by what went on outside the ring. Also he probably will be penalized by not getting the fights he wants. After all who wants to go through all that drama? I can understand his bad feelings about getting canceled twice by Wladimar. I think most people would be upset by the events that lead up to those fights being canceled but no one including Frank Warren condones or justifies what he did this weekend. He should appreciate the fact that Vitali wanted to give him his shot. Some appreciation he showed. Wlad needed to stay out of his face because this wasn't his fight, it belonged to his brother. It is my opinion that Vitali looked as bad as he did because of Chisora. Chisora did not allow Vitali to make him into a human punching bag nor did he allow him to have his way with him by keeping him at distance. It is strange how these fighters can look good in a fight and then all of a sudden they look old, injuries happen, they look robotic etc. when someone forces the action and pushed them out of their element. I can almost guarantee you if Vitali gets another underachiever in his next fight, and that is most of the heavyweights out there, all of a sudden he will look like a million dollars again and people will say he is ageless as a fighter once more. Chisora hurt himself more than he hurt anyone but he did hurt others and he shamed the sport itself. This out of line behavior doesn't add any intrigue, this is more like ugly thuggery and some swift severe measures have to be taken.

amayseng says:

good response Gib, completely concur...

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chisora may be the future if he doesnt land himself in prison at some point...haha

i would like to see either wlad vs chisora or haye vs chisora, at least the hype is there

for those bouts and we saw chisora, although a psycho, took it to vitali as best he

could he came to fight and he came to win, than equals good fights....