

Arthur Abraham and Robert Stieglitz Fight Rematch Tomorrow

Written by Michael Woods
Friday, 22 March 2013 14:36



Yes, the 168 pound division is ruled tight-fistedly by Andre Ward. There is Andre Ward, and then everyone else is a distant second. But that doesn't mean that we have to or should ignore fights at super middleweight just because Ward has beaten the best of the breed there. On Saturday, in Germany, Arthur Abraham (*seen above, left, with WBO super middle belt he took off Stieglitz, right*), who the Transnational Boxing Rankings Board has installed as the fourth best 168 in the world, meets the No. 5 TBR, Robert

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Stieglitz.

They've tussled before, in August 2012, with Abraham (36-3 with 28 KOs), the Armenian-born hitter who lives in Berlin, taking a UD12. That bout took place in Berlin, but this one, which will screen on EPIX in the US, will unfold in Magdeburg, which is where Stieglitz (43-3 with 24 KOs), who was born in Russia, lives.

I touched base with Travis Pomposello, the EPIX COO who is in Germany, overseeing and coordinating the event for TV, to get a better sense of the stakes. First question: How and why is this matchup an EPIX fight?

"Their first fight I was approached about it, to buy it, and I said, 'Abraham didn't do anything in the Super Six, he was a bit disappointing and no one in America knows Stieglitz, I'll pass, we'll do something else.' Then, it happens, it was great, and the Armenian people in LA who have EPIX thru Verizon were reaching out. So with the rematch, it was a no brainer. The fans told us the fight belongs on EPIX, so we listened. The first one was a contender for fight of the year, I expect more of the same."

Of all the TV execs, Pomposello perhaps has the best sense of the ring; he fought amateur, and was in the NY Golden Gloves. So I asked about what each needs to do, from a technical standpoint, to win.

"They have two very different styles, Stieglitz is very active, without KO power. He told me during a fighter meeting that he's looking to win on points. Abraham has a controversial style, covering up, forcing you to go low, he has an iron head. Stieglitz has to counter quickly before Abraham gets his guard back up, and watch the low blows. Abraham throws the jab, then the overhand right, he needs to be busier, especially earlier in rounds, throw more combos, not just the one-two."

What intel have you picked up, is there anything you have heard or learned in Germany which has made your thinking shift on the main event?

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"Yeah, I do think it goes the distance, I don't think either man is looking for a KO, I think they want to win on points. One thing, I spoke to Stieglitz and the cuts (he sustained in the first fight) affected him emotionally tremendously. He told me a fellow boxer he knew lost his eyesight from similar cuts. His vision got blurry, it made him nervous. But he said he did lot of work psychologically to overcome that, so it won't be factor, though he knows his skin breaks easily."

Does that make you take a harder look at Stieglitz, perhaps question his warrior hear? "No, he's a human being, he wasn't blaming the loss on it, like David Hays blamed his toe. I do think that he's gotten stronger, and he's not going to let it get to him.

"On the other side, Abraham told me he felt immature in the Super Six, now he's more mature. He was insecure, not ready as the favorite entering the tournament. He has renewed confidence, he's grown into the weight class and his skin. He feels he's the most dominant he's ever been. Both are saying they're much more confident, so I think we're in for more of the same, and maybe more action.

"Both have been real gentlemen to the EPIX team and given us great access. I'm not rooting for either, I'm rooting for a great fight for all us boxing fans."

I also talked with promoter Lou Dibella, who is working for EPIX doing analysis on that fight, and a co-feature, which pits Robert Helenius (18-0 with 11 KOs; age 29; born in Sweden, lives in Berlin) against trial-horse Michael Sprott (37-19 with 17 KOs; 1-4 in last five; age 38; from England), about the Saturday scraps.

So, Lou, which fighter has more left at this juncture, the 31-year-old Stieglitz or the just-turned-33-year-old Abraham?

"Stieglitz, to me, looks a bit fresher, a bit younger and fitter," DiBella said. "That being said if he does have more left in the tank, that doesn't doesn't negate the power of Abraham. Stieglitz has got to fight three minutes of every round and keep out of danger. I watched the first fight a few times, and you could have scored it either way. But Stieglitz gave away rounds, he blew it by not fighting three minutes of every round. In too many rounds, he closed with a whimper."

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And will a hometown advantage help Stieglitz?

"I think it will help, if he's legitimately close to winning it will give Stieglitz an advantage. But Abraham's big advantage is not skills, or technique, or anything, it's power. There's not much a crowd can do to negate power. Stieglitz needs to keep it a boxing match."

With Andre Ward still at 168, is this division simply Ward...and then everyone else? Does it lead to a certain hopelessness for everyone but Ward? "You have Adonis Stevenson, Tommy Oosthuizen, Edwin Rodriguez, George Groves, Thomas DeGale, young talent, and the Super Six, the old school guys still," DiBella said. "Yes, Ward is the best at 168, but he'll go to 175 soon. It strikes me that there might be bigger fights at 175 for him." DiBella, by the way, sits pretty in this division, promoting both Tommy O and Rodriguez.

And what do you want to see from the 6-1 1/2 Helenius, speaking as "promoter Lou?"

"I want to see 'The Nordic Nightmare,' not 'The Nordic Nyquil," he said. "He had a bad shoulder so I give him a pass for a couple fights," he said. (Helenius had an injured right shoulder going in to his Dec. 2011 fight with Dereck Chisora and he made it worse in that fight, a SD12 win. He came back after almost a year, and won a UD10 against 5-11 journeyman Sherman Williams last November.) "Against Sherman Williams, the size difference made it hard, Williams is incredibly short, but he still shouldn't have had Helenius going backwards. Helenius is not going to lose to Spratt, probably, but this fight is not about wins or losses, it's about if Helenius wins or loses fans. He had a great performance against Samuel Peter (April 2011 KO9 win), and a couple other guys, but hasn't looked like the same guy."

Any idea why he's been flat, beyond the shoulder issue? "Helenius told Bruce (Beck, who will do play by play with analyst DiBella) that he thinks he was tentative against Williams because he was coming off an injury. Now, I think he'll be more confident in shoulder."

Can you sum it up for us, Lou? "The main event's outcome is in serious doubt," DiBella said. "And Helenius is trying to show he belongs in with a Klitschko brother."

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Check out some footage of the [Friday weigh in here](#) . The fight airs live in the U.S. **Tomorrow!**;

Saturday, March 23

, on

EPIX

and will be streamed live to the U.S. on

EpixHD.com

(as part of a free two-week trial) -- both at 4 p.m. ET / 1 p.m. PT.

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Disclosure notice: I do some work for EPIX, in the social media realm.

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