

Wladimir Handles Rahman With Ease

Written by Michael Woods

Friday, 12 December 2008 19:00

It is the least interesting weight division in boxing, the heavyweight class. And a most uninteresting title fight took place in Germany on Saturday, which pitted IBF/WBO champ Wladimir Klitschko against beyond-faded Hasim Rahman. Wlad dominated every second of every round, until the ref had seen enough, and he stepped in and halted the bout early in the seventh.

The best that can be said for the affair: that the 36-year-old Rahman, who stepped in for Alex Povetkin at the 11th hour, didn't come to Germany just for some holiday spending money. He ate his share of shots, and hit the deck in the sixth round.

TSS would've liked to see maybe David Haye step in for Povetkin, instead of Rahman, who hasn't done anything to deserve this opportunity apart from being alive and under 300 pounds.

In the first, Wlad fended off Rock's jabs. Rock was bent more in the knees than we've seen before. His hands were low, though, and he looked open for the straight right. Wlad's jab was stiffer, and he looked in complete command from the start. A left hook and right follow to the body ended the round well for him.

In the second, the the 32-year-old Wlad (52-3) jab was even stiffer. Ref Tony Weeks warned Rock (45-7-2) for hitting behind the head. Rock's slow hands didn't threaten to touch Wlad's chin, which used to be seen as suspect. His feet were too stationary, and one suspected he wouldn't get more energized as the rounds piled up.

In the third, Wlad caught Rock on the ropes. The American had his guard up but didn't counter at all. He ate hard jab after jab, and answered with his own jabs, which missed. With a minute to go, he came off the ropes, but that didn't help.

In the fourth, Wlad's feet, as usual, got him out of harms way. He'd back up a step when he sensed Rock coming forward. And Rock doesn't advance quickly enough to catch him unawares.

In round five, Rock in hung in there. He at least didn't come to lay down early, we can say that. Wlad started with more one-twos, which means he would be trying to stop him soonish. Rock's cornerman Buddy McGirt told him not to stay on the outside and get dissected.

In round six, Rock ate left hooks and a right and hit the deck. He got up, and backed up to the ropes. He held on, buying time, for what? A stoppage 30 seconds later? A round later? "Fight back, Rahman," ref Weeks warned. He did, with ineffectual jabs. But, he did finish the round. Again, looking for silver lining, he didn't look for a hole in the floor to escape. Weeks warned him after that he wouldn't let him continue longer if he didn't answer back.

In round seven, Rock ate shots, and backed up, and didn't answer, and Weeks stepped in

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hastily.

The stats: Wlad went 178-369 against the immobile Rahman, who landed 30-207. Pathetic numbers, and I must say, this division isn't helped by the unimaginitive programmers, who instead of yanking Arreola or Haye or Toney or Valuev to step in, gave the shot to Rahman. Do I bore you with my critique? Too bad, the powers that be need to hear it, because they are poisoning the sport with their calls.

Check back for Phil Woolever's ringside report.