Written by Phil Woolever
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BERNE - Relatively speaking, Vitali Klitschko's even wider than it sounded unanimous 12 round decision over a reclusive Kevin Johnson was a pretty crappy exhibition as far as heavyweight title fights are supposed to go.

The card was a major event in the intellectually partying, medieval magicland where Albert Einstein formulated his theories on relativity which involved energy, time and movement. Too bad Johnson's lack of effort was in no way equal to Klitschko's offensive energy, misdirected as it often was.

"This was the most difficult boxing match I've had since I came back," reflected a scuffed up WBC titlist Klitschko, now 39-2 (37). "I wanted to knock him out, and I always tried to, but I couldn't hit him correctly because he was moving away too fast. It is difficult to fight someone who doesn't want to trade punches."

A sold out PostFinance Arena of around 17,000 vocal boxing fans, including a huge standing room area, stayed rowdy almost all night. It says something about the quality of the main event's action that just about the only down time all night came during those middle frames.

Ticket prices were listed from around 60 to 2,000 Swiss Francs, which exchanges to approximately 43 to 1,500 US bucks. People in each price range deserved a bit more bang for whatever the dollar from Johnson, 22-1-1 (9), who did an excellent job cranking up the wonderfully well-heeled town but couldn't seem to find the energy once the bell rang.

Einstein's research on the "electrodynamics of moving bodies" also lead to his Light Quantum Hypothesis, which subsequently earned him the Nobel Prize. Unfortunately Johnson was nothing like the sweet scientist he claimed to be. There was much movement, but little of it was dynamic and Johnson, 242 1/2, may have let a real opportunity against a sub-par Klitschko, 247, slip into the chilly dawn.

Basically, some of Dr. Albert's proofs provided evidence about perceptual experience. The equation Johnson offered at the postfight press conference showed how abstract miscalculations can stray as he attempted to make the best of a dismal showing.

Actually, hearing Johnson talk as if he had scored his predicted KO was laughable.

"If he's still here we're going to fight again after I polish some things up," said the generally unmarked Johnson with a straight face. "In the first two rounds I knew I could break him down. But I had a technical injury to my elbow that stopped me from being able to throw my best punches. My biggest thing is I didn't want to quit. You're not a champion unless you alter your game plan. I didn't tell my trainers about my injuries because I didn't want them to get panicked. That was that."

Mauling math wise it seemed absurd to award Johnson even one round, based on his survival mode tactics, on the 119-109 card by judge Guido Cavalleri. Fabian Guggenheim and Omar Mintum agreed at 120 -108.

That said, Johnson did often succeed at making Klitschko look pretty sloppy. Referee Kenny Bayless had to pry them apart or redirect from many awkward angles.

As the fight began, both well-conditioned men leaned back at the hip and tried to adjust to ranges of negative space. It was many minutes before any serious thumps connected. Klitschko's arms looked much longer than his listed 2-inch reach advantage.

Eventually, Klitschko stepped down on his punches and threw some decent body-head combinations. Johnson remained in a very defensive posture, sometimes leaning back over the ropes as if he were attempting a limbo dance.

Finally, in the 4th frame, Johnson started to jump off the strands with counterpunches. Klitschko kept following but never really cut the ring completely off. Klitschko was marked around both eyes by the fifth from far less than a fierce firefight.

By the sixth session, Johnson was countering effectively but not consistently enough to earn extra points.

In the 7th, Johnson started to show the effects of Klitschko's powerful pressure as the crowd urged Klitschko on. Klitschko kept Johnson off-balance with straight-armed heavy leather, but the champion also missed a lot and Johnson never failed to wriggle out of danger.

The US visitor did a good job with evasive head movement, and if they gave rounds for rolling with the punches he coulda hadda shot. Johnson shook his head with mock disgust after what clean punches Klitschko did land and gave Klitschko more verbal abuse than stinging shots.

Klitschko continued to gain leverage if not complete accuracy. By the stretch it looked like Johnson was just in there to go the distance.

Klitschko trapped him against the ropes better than tonight's usual in the 10th and the restless swarm revived, but the truth is Johnson probably could have lasted 20 rounds or more.

Klitschko continued to widen his lead and the open scoring announcements just about sucked any anticipation from the hall. Not that the near shutout was any surprise at any point.

Klitschko trapped Johnson in a corner in the 11th and landed dozens of grazing gloves to close the show that made the customers satisfied. Johnson staggered just before the final bell, but never looked hurt very much. Translate that to he should have fought harder after such a long trip and so many promises.

TSS gave Klitschko every round, but took a point from each man for failing to deliver on knockout promises, which resulted in a score of 119-107 for the suddenly more vulnerable

looking Klitschko.

"I really wanted to hurt him," said Klitschko, without visible emotion but obviously contemplative. "If the fight was a little bit longer I would have destroyed him. I came to fight but Johnson came to run away."

"It's all right," insisted Johnson. "I did what no other fighter has been able to do for a long time, and go the distance. I'm not a quitter."

"I would have preferred a busier fight," said Klitschko trainer Fritz Sudnek, "But it was good that Vitali was so aggressive at the end. I was happy with the last of the fight."

In Switzerland, the locals have always shown me they possess a very positive spirit whatever the circumstances. A large crowd remained outside the arena despite temperatures in the low 20s fahrenheit, and there were no sings of disappointment over the dukes or lack of.

Klitschko did look ripe for the taking tonight. If he was in there with Eddie Chambers, set to meet brother Wladimir this spring, there might have been a whole different experiment.

For now, Klitschko heads into the hearty holiday season here with another notch on his rumbling resume. The most probable scenario down the line at this point is a September meeting with Ray Austin according to team Klitschko. Gravity did not shift with that discussion.

On the way home on a bulging bus at 3am, the last of tonight's Klitschko faithful had turned massive, connected coaches into the guts of a giant snake that was wrapped in swill soaked Ukrainian flags and sang along the light-snow-touched streets.

One chap had a bit too much of the party juice and threw up as the pack groaned and jumped away from the splatter. Then the bus pulled over and waited to let the guy vomit up whatever was left in his belly. Very civilized.

That's about what Johnson did. He puked on the Klitschko express.

The ride goes on.

Ultimately, Klitschko remained successful and content, and maintained his open, engaging demeanor as always. He acknowledged that a fight against David Haye was the biggest future step to be taken.

"I already said it would be very interesting to fight Haye in 2010," said Klitschko. "Actually, after he fights John Ruiz, and if he beats him, let's see. I wish Haye good luck. We all know it's very difficult to make negotiations with him. As I have repeated, (I'm ready) anytime."

Advice to Johnson is pull off the curb and get back in the fast lane, or quit honking your horn.

As for Vitali, he is a much more worldly citizen and better educated than most of us, but it

doesn't take a genius to see that tonight's battle plan and execution add up to a weak formula for legacy or longevity.