

Slammin' in Stuttgart, the Big Boys Deliver Again

Written by Phil Woolever

Monday, 27 February 2012 10:04



DUSSELDORF - For the second straight weekend in Germany, heavyweight boxing has exceeded expectations with an exciting, hard fought contest between top fighters in the division. Alexander Povetkin's raucous rumble with a surprising, inspired Marco Huck provided plenty of good action.

Granted, outside this international area, expectations for the 200 plus pounders remain relatively low in the historic context of a more "global" (ie: USA) fan base, but could remain on the rise if consensus champion Wladimir Klitschko wins big, as it appears on paper he should, against Jean Marc Mormeck this Saturday.

Some intrigue may be derived from Mormeck being from the same mold, though smaller, as Lamon Brewster, the last man to beat Klitschko, back almost a decade ago in April '04.

The crowd in ESPRIT Arena here will number well over 35,000 as the scene in these parts remains vibrant, with numerous big bouts on the Western Europe horizon.

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That doesn't mean everything was peachy in Stuttgart. Storm clouds remained after last week's Munich meltdowns.

Bild.de News reported that Huck had received ethnic based death threats which included his family and trainer Ulli Wegner. The Serbia to Berlin transplant was advised to "go back to where you came from" and there was a reference to him being "hunted."

Amidst that backdrop of ancient regional rivalries that include ages of real warfare lasting longer than the US has existed, there were flags of many colors. By many accounts the night remained safe, cheerful and sportsmanlike. Hopefully, that's some evidence indicating mankind has advanced, at least a tiny bit.

Even an upbeat Dereck Chisora, back in the current boxing hotbed of Germany, was apparently on best behavior and welcomed.

Inside the ring things were as wild as they're supposed to be, for an ear even brawl that more than made up in heart what it lacked in style.

My scorecard from the ARD livestream was 115 apiece. It seemed many rounds could go either way (I had 2 rounds even and at least 2 more could have been). Maybe Philippe Verbeke's 114-114 draw was the right call. I wouldn't argue with John Coyle's 116-113 score for Povetkin.

Stanley Christodoulou's 116-112 Povetkin seemed a bit wide, but not if you factor in the points Huck probably should have lost for hitting behind the head. Why ref Luis Pabon or Povetkin himself allowed Huck to continually press down as Povetkin crouched forward in an unproductive stance remains a question. How Huck punched downward as if hammering a spike, sometimes landing almost between Povetkin's shoulders without reprimand, remains a tarnish.

Povetkin and Huck would probably never beat, or even last 15 old school rounds, against excellent, all-time heavyweight performers like Ken Norton or Michael Spinks, but the current Euros can compete at that level and act like the type that would welcome the chance. Spinks - Norton? Classic. I'd lean slightly toward Spinks, depending on the night.

It's often amusing for me to hear perspectives on the merits of this heavyweight generation (ie: Euro/Germany area) compared to the much more respectably referred to '80s performers (ie: US).

I'm certainly not flawless regarding predictions or perspective. I am, however, one of the very few ringside observers to have seen both the

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Holmes/Tyson/Spinks/WITHERSPOON/Holyfield/Lewis era's elite many times, and the current Euro crop in person.

Since many US journalists have never seen any of the Euros like Povetkin, Huck, Denis Boytsov or Robert Helenius in live action, I do feel quite qualified to tell you that the perceived wide gap in talent, much of it from a US based viewpoint, is considerably less than completely accurate.

However you scored Povetkin - Huck, it looked like a nice, level playing field between the Sauerland "stablemates", though going in it looked like Huck had more promotional connections. His corner wore matching Team Sauerland gear.

Around here, important fights between top fighters from the same promotional "team" engage at all levels, often in the exact same regalia. The "may the best man win" philosophy minimizes hard feelings.

Povetkin won the fight but Huck won the Deutschland night, and showed Povetkin will need further punching polish to compete with a K-bro. That doesn't mean Povetkin will never be a true title threat, but at this point it's still a stretch.

In this case, the 20 pound weight advantage didn't translate to a huge size differential like it would if Huck boxed a Klitschko. Huck and Povetkin looked to be about the same general size, but Huck would be at the end of a much longer stick against a K2 bro.

On current form of all, either Klitschko should KO Huck within eight rounds, though it would be entertaining while it lasted and could provide the mauling edge Huck needs to win a rematch against Povetkin.

Povetkin started well, but when Huck made the battle a mosh pit he improved his chances. Many of his punches landed atop or behind Povetkin's ears. They may have been of borderline propriety but they were doubtless still jarring. Huck was reckless but persistent and it paid off.

When Huck gained mid-fight momentum you could almost hear the cross-Atlantic murmurs about Povetkin missing Teddy Atlas, but actually, new head cornerman Alex Zimin seemed to be giving Povetkin decent advice about staying busier inside and employing more of his technical edge.

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Whether or not, or how much, Atlas might have helped was a moot point. Huck came to win. He was a tough out on this night, and that's for almost anybody, any era.

By the 8th round, Povetkin huffed and puffed like he was out of gloved up gas, but he kept rumbling. By the 10th, Povetkin had, typically, gotten his second wind and surged back as Huck's eyes began to bruise.

Both men wobbled from weariness in the 11th. Povetkin scored with multiple lefts as each man landed big rights after the bell. The 12th was another wild session.

Povetkin and Huck put on a great show. A rematch, potentially lucrative for both, seems an obvious priority.

Does Hasim Rahman really deserve the shot at Povetkin before Huck gets another chance? Rahman did shock Lewis. Ten years ago.

Is Rahman an ironic representative of past USA heavyweight glory, coming up symbolically against current European dominance?

That's a promotional issue that may be exploited.

Meanwhile, it is still, clearly, a K2 world in terms of the heavyweight division.

Meanwhile, Povetkin and Huck proved there are still some interesting factors to be considered.

The more things change for the heavyweights these days, the more they remain the same, and maybe that's not so bad after all.

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BHarper85 says:

I agree it was a close, entertaining fight. I scored it 115-113 for Huck, but with several different rounds than Dan Rafael, who scored it the same. I also agree that several rounds could've gone either way. I totally disagree about Huck probably deserving points deducted for hitting behind the head. Povetkin was ducking like he was trying to literally kiss the canvas throughout the fight. Huck was just throwing punches and it wasn't dirty at all. It was Povetkin's fault, if anything. Also, the ref was absolutely way too involved with the fight. Every time they got close, sometimes not even in a clinch, he would break them up. To me, it seemed to help Povetkin because it made it more difficult for Huck to pressure him. Had it been a ref like Steve Smoger, who lets guys fight, I think Huck would've won, probably by a late KO.

Matthew says:

Why would anyone consider Ken Norton an all-time great heavyweight? He holds the dubious distinction of being the only heavyweight titleholder never to actually win a fight for the heavyweight title. Sure, he beat Ali once, but he was also kayoed in the first round by Shavers and Cooney. He was a good fighter that fought in a great era, but should NOT be in the hall of fame. As for Spinks, he IS an all-time great, just not an all-time great heavyweight. Yes, he was the first man to defeat Larry Holmes, but he also got a gift decision in the rematch, and beating Steffan Tangstad and Gerry Cooney does not a great heavyweight resume make.

gibola says:

Povetkin and Huck wouldn't beat Ken Norton in a million years, they wouldn't lay a glove on the 85/86 Spinks, Tony Tubbs and even David Haye would beat them but that's fine. Their weaknesses made for an even, entertaining scrap and gave us a clue that without the K Bros there would be some decent matchups out there (albeit at a much lower quality). As a hardcore boxing fan I don't mind saying I'd rather watch Povetkin-Huck II than any matchup involving Wlad. This is an entertainment business and add Haye, Arreola, Adamek and Chisora into the mix and any matchup is potentially entertaining, perhaps we could have a Super-6 for 'Guys who can't beat Wlad'. It has to be more fun than watching Wlad v Mormeck!