Written by Michael Woods
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Wladimir Klitschko and Emanuel Steward chatted with fightwriters on Wednesday afternoon about Wlad's Saturday title defense against Jean-Mormeck, which will run on EPIX. I've yet to meet or hear from the person who thinks Mormeck, an undersized, over-aged cruiserweight, has an ounce of a chance. But one does never know; this sport is the theater of the unexpected, and a Hell Mary bomb out of nowhere could in theory separate Wlad from his senses and his belt in Dusseldorf.

The fight broadcast kicks off Saturday at 4:30 PM ET. You can also watch on the JumboTron in Times Square.

Steward said that Mormeck has a style unlike anyone Wlad has seen. His bob and weave style will be hard for a tall fighter, Manny said. "You don't have much of a target," he said, and breaking his hands is a risk. He said training camp has been hard, because he thinks Mormeck won't be easy to solve. This will not be a quickie KO outing, and Wlad will need to be patient, as Lennox Lewis was with Mike Tyson. "We can't underestimate this guy..One punch can turn everything around," he said. Steward cited the Hasim Rahman one-punch KO of Lennox Lewis

in South Africa in 2002.

"Wladimir has trained as hard or harder than in any fight." he said.

Steward said the fact that Mormeck will have it harder because he hasn't fought since December 2010 (SD12 win over Timor Ibragimov). He said the first couple rounds could be tough.

Steward was asked if Wlad might be overtrained, because of the postponement. (The bout was set for December, but was postponed, because Wlad had a kidney stone.) No, he said, they have their system down. He could fight another four or five years, the trainer stated. The trainer said he and Wlad are like "hitmen" who study foes, and determine how to take them down. "I'm always excited about a heavyweight championship fight," he said, and reiterated that he is wary of an upset.

ESPN's Dan Rafael asked Steward what he saw in Mormeck that concerns him. The concern, he said, comes from the 56-3 Wlad maybe underestimating Mormeck. No, skillswise, Mormeck isn't stellar, Steward said. Steward said he knows Wlad is a technical guy, not a bomber, not someone who looks to close the show. He recognizes and accepts that. "It's going to be frustrating for maybe a couple rounds," he said, but then he expects Wlad to pull away.

Wlad (age 35) too expects a great challenge from Mormeck (36-4 with 22 KOs; ex cruiser champ; beat an older Virgil Hill twice, lost to Haye), who turns 40 in June, early on. He said he looked slow and "looked poor" at a press workout but expects him to look better on Saturday. He noted that ex Mike Tyson trainer Kevin Rooney will work Mormeck's corner.

Wlad said that in Europe, heavyweight boxing is alive and well, and the arena will be jammed Saturday. Those fans won't be put off that Mormeck is only 5-11 1/2 to Wlad's 6-6. He said the underdog has everything to win and nothing to lose on Saturday, so he must respect that. JMM will be in shape and will be aggressive and shoot from different angles, Wlad said.

The fighter said of the Povetkin-Huck scrap that he missed the bout. "What I heard was not

really kind of exciting in the way of knockouts and knockdowns," he said.

Wlad said soon younguns like Seth Mitchell, and Cris Arreola will be ready for challenges with the Klitschkos. He said he is looking forward to fighting in the US this year and that he has been missing that buzz which comes from fighting in America. He last gloved up in the US in 2008, against Sultan Ibragimov at Madison Square Garden.

Steward said he'd like to see Wlad meet Arreola, who would bring him out of his comfort zone. And then maybe Seth Mitchell. HBO, Showtime or EPIX can step up to make it happen. Wlad said New York is his favorite city in the US, and even if the foe isn't stellar, interest would be high. The fight does need to make economic sense, so I took that to mean he won't take a heavy discount from the money he can gross in Germany.

Wlad and Povetkin in the US could sell out and get solid buzz, according to Steward. Yes, fighting in front of 50,000 is fun, and it makes mad money...but the buzz you get in the US is still special.

Wlad brought up Rahman's shocker win over Lewis. "The worst thing I could do is lose my focus," he said. He said he hasn't forgotten his difficult 2003-2004, when he lost twice, to Corrie Sanders and then Lamon Brewster. He said he didn't want to promise a KO, because he did so against Haye, but said he would look for a stoppage.

He said he still loves what he does, and that he isn't frustrated that marquee foes haven't emerged. Steward said it does frustrate him. He said he likes Mitchell, who could be a good challenge. "It might be the worst heavyweight time in history," Steward said of the era the Ks fight in. Larry Holmes went through much of the same, and so did Lewis, he pointed out. All the Klitschkos can do, he said, is beat who they have put in front of him. The Haye challenge did create some excitement. He said sooner or later, if he keeps ahold of the title, a challenge will come from some nook or cranny.

COO Travis Pomposello, calling from Germany, said he was happy to complete the mini-series of heavyweight bouts, which jumped from Vitali-Chisora, to Povetkin-Huck, and now Wladimir-Mormeck, on consecutive Saturdays. "It's been great for EPIX and fight fans in the US to have the Klitschkos defend their titles," he said, and who knows, maybe it'll happen next in

the US.

The remaining 5,000 seats left sold over the last two weeks, and Team Klitschko's Tom Loeffler said it will be a sellout, with 50,000 people in Esprit Stadium.

Loeffler said there's no way Wlad would come to the US and fight in the Barclays Center, in Brooklyn, because Golden Boy has exclusive rights to that venue. That venue, he said, wanted Wlad to fight there, but he said he wouldn't co-promote with GB. Wlad said he'd like to fight again in Madison Square Garden. "New York, the East Coast is the logical step to fight in," he said. Loeffler said Barclays approached them, but that MSG would be a fine venue. Wlad sold out MSG for Ibragimov, he said, so if they get a good deal from a US broadcaster, they will do it.

The Ola Afolabi-Valery Brudov cruiserweight scrap, for an interim title, will also be shown.

If I'm Mormeck, I employ the Corrie Sanders style against Wlad. Go at him guns blazing, get in his face, rush him, right away. Yank him out of his comfort zone. Throw everything you have at him for as long as you got it. If you flame out, and he's still standing, then take your lumps, eat a few bombs, and then call it a night. You'll have done your best, and given fans three or six minutes of rock 'em, sock 'em stuff, rather than 12 rounds of pulling-wings-off-a-fly thrills. My two cents...

Comment on this article

gibola says:

Obscene mismatch. I saw Mormeck's last fight and if he lasts two rounds with Wlad then I would be very surprised. Even super-cautious Wlad has to open up on a slow, small heavyweight who isn't even in the top-20 heavvies in these desperate times. If Mormeck goes past 6 rounds Wlad should be forced to run the Dusseldorf Branch of the Derek Chisora FanClub and be David Haye's butler for a day. Did I mention it's a mismatch?

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Yeah, but who do you think will WIN? Stop beating around the bush. Anyway, y'all know I'm the Ukraine cheering squad here, but this fight really annoys me. I suppose all the champs have fought some serious long-shot fights, but this does nothing good except aid Mormeck's retirement fund. Yawn.