KLITSCHKO TERRITORY, NORTH - By the time Manuel Charr, 241 1/2, weighed in yesterday afternoon, his demeanor had convinced a few EU observers that he possessed the proper attitude to give Vitali Klitschko, 248, some problems during their fight Saturday night at Moscow's Olimpijski.

Most people who had seen Charr's recent fights in Germany figured he did not have any chance.

Both those assessments proved to be as accurate as Klitschko's power shots eventually did, as the defending WBC titlist stopped the brain-willing, but bodily unable, previously undefeated challenger in the blood splattered fourth frame of a fight that was just getting interesting.

Charr came to fight, and while he never gave Klitschko any problems during their abbreviated waltz, he did mix it up more than anybody else beside Derick Chisora. Charr put together some of the very few combinations to catch Klitscko since his 2008 comeback.

Klitschko cuffed Charr to the canvas for the first time in Charr's pro career with a questionable, downward sweeping right that looped around Charr's ear and caught him on the deltoids as the second round ended.

After spending the first frame on his toes, backing up and circling Klitschko, Charr marched forward and was still attempting to carry out a fairly aggressive fight plan when Klitschko sliced him open with a big left that opened a crimson geyser and created a new Red Square, ringpost style.

When referee Guido Cavellari ruled the cut was too deep to continue, a bloody Charr protested emotionally and almost climbed over him, gesturing for Klitschko to continue. The despondent Charr almost begged for more punishment. Most of Klitschko's previous opponents should have taken that page from Charr's play book.

Considering the stakes and Charr's still solid looking condition, he might have deserved a bit more of a chance. Trying to get an official time by posting deadline, or how much remained in the round, was initially as futile as trying to get any consideration from Russian consulates regarding a US citizen travel visa without greasing the old state wheel.

Eet izz vat eet izz, Comrade, just like tonight's disappointing escapade was in Moscow.

For Klitschko, that means another step closer to imminent retirement. A March bout against David Haye could be the swan song.

"Charr made it interesting for me," said Klitschko. "He's definitely a tough fighter. What happens next will much depend on Ukraine's elections in October, but I am certainly getting near the end of my boxing career, and I am very satisfied."

As for Charr, a Beirut transplant based in Cologne, it seemed like he was ready to give it all tonight. Maybe he did, maybe there's something more. Based on Charr's effort, it might be fistic justice if he got to meet Haye next. Charr has also tried to face Haye before, and from the looks of things, even though Haye would be favored, it would be a solid elimination bout for the Klitschko sweepstakes.

"Everybody knows I could have continued, whatever might have happened next," offered the

crestfallen contender, who at least showed he wanted to win. "I was going to open up in the second half of the fight but I didn't get a chance."

At least Charr, now 21-1, tried to make the most of what chance he got, a chance he jumped at when many have faltered. Charr might not believe it when he examines his cut in the mirror, but if he can keep the attitude he had when he arrived in Russia he might not have lost as much as it seemed when the blood was in his eyes.

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