

## WHO DO YA LIKE?? Geale or Barker? Cleverly or Kovalev?

Written by Kelsey McCarson  
Friday, 16 August 2013 13:25

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This Saturday's HBO card is a good one. Middleweights Daniel Geale (29-1, 15 KOs) and Darren Barker (25-1, 16 KOs) will battle each other in the main event, each in hopes of solidifying himself as a legitimate threat to long-reigning but increasingly aging and injured division kingpin Sergio Martinez. Both fighters have just one loss on their records -- Geale a

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close decision loss to the athletic Anthony Mundine in 2009 (which was avenged this year), and Barker an 11th round knockout loss to Martinez in what was until that point a remarkably close fight.

Having been in with the best, Barker believes he now has what it takes to defeat fighters like Geale.

"I've heard people say in the past that you can learn from defeat, but I always thought that was mad – how can anything good come from losing?" Barker said. "[But] it's not until you experience something invaluable like a defeat in a World title fight to a World class pound-for-pound star like Sergio Martinez that you appreciate the sentiment and I really have taken that negative - losing in a World title fight - and built on it to go one better. I feel I've matured from it, and I'm in my prime at 31 now."

Barker says he and Geale know each other very well from their amateur days.

"I've kept an eye on his pro career as I have on a number of others, and I'm very confident. I know what he's all about. I know what I'm all about, and I know how to beat him, so I can't wait for August 17."

Geale is equally confident.

"I've seen some of his pro fights, and he seems very confident about beating me. He's a smart boxer, a real thinker. He's nice and rangy, and he likes to pick people off, use his speed, skills, footwork and frustrate people."

Geale said he plans to be the one that does the frustrating, and that he believes Barker won't be able to keep up a good enough pace to win the fight.

"Barker has a lot of ability. He has a similar style to me, but Barker does not have my work rate.

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He likes to dictate and control, move and jab and keep long, but he doesn't throw the volume of punches that I do. It's going to be a bit of a chess match. It will come down to who wants it the most, and I'm sure I want the title more."

Geale is an alphabet titlist (IBF) and ranked number two in the world at middleweight by the Transnational Boxing Rankings Board. Barker is unranked.

Al Bernstein previewed the fight for the Boxing Channel. Bernstein said it'll be a battle of two confident fighters. Barker, he said, has impressed since his loss to Martinez.

"Since that fight, he has put together two knockout wins," said Bernstein. "This 31-year old believes he can handle Danny Geale."

Meanwhile, Bernstein believes Geale's 2013 win over fellow Australian Anthony Mundine was huge, but not quite as big as his win over Felix Sturm in 2012.

"He's done something no one else did. He beat Felix Sturm in Germany in a fight...so that was an extraordinary event for sure."

Bernstein also believes Geale has America on his mind.

"Danny Geale really wants to impress American fans...he wants to win over the hearts and minds of the American boxing fans."

The Hall of Famer expects a good tussle.

"This should be a very difficult match for Geale and should be a terrific match to watch," said Bernstein.

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Before the middleweights take center stage, light heavyweights Nathan Cleverly (26-0, 12) and Sergey Kovalev (20-0-1, 18 KOs) will duke it out to see who truly is the best up-and-comer in the division.

Cleverly, a WBO belt holder, is seeking respect. He says he's had trouble getting fights against top contenders, despite the gold trinket he lugs around his waist. Cleverly was awarded the title belt without winning it in the ring, but has defended it five times since.

"It had taken a year to get Juergen Braehmer in the ring with me and when we thought we had him, he pulled out and I was awarded the title outside of the ring."

Cleverly said a fight against Kovalev will finally give him the opportunity to show the world what he's made of.

"We've tried making the big fights but the names have avoided me," he said. "It's been frustrating but this is a massive breakthrough fight for me. I'm fighting the most dangerous [man] in the division - Sergey Kovalev. The Russian is building a big reputation in America, and his punch is even bigger. Nobody else wants to say Kovalev's name, let alone fight him but I will beat him to show I am the best light heavyweight in the world, and I will force the big names to fight me."

Cleverly has long been rumored as a potential opponent for Bernard Hopkins. A win over Kovalev could only help matters.

Meanwhile, hard-puncher Kovalev has gone from 11-year-old street fighter to educated boxer-puncher. He credits his time spent in the Russian amateur system with his transformation into what he is today, though he also said he was forced to turn professional in 2008 because of the country's politics.

"I decided to leave the Russian national team and turn pro," said Kovalev.

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Kovalev left country and family in 2009 in order to "make it big as a professional fighter." He said his wife, Natalia, joined him three years later.

"It's hard to be away from our families and friends in Chelyabinsk but we've found a nice group of friends here."

It seems the hard work and sacrifice is finally paying off. Kovalev burst onto the stage in January by dismantling veteran Gabriel Campillo in just three rounds.

"I see just a target," Kovalev said of his approach that night to NBC's Chris Mannix. Perhaps prophetically, he then said he was eager to fight "any champion" next, and mentioned Cleverly by name.

Kovalev is ranked number four in the world at light heavyweight by the Transnational Boxing Rankings Board. Cleverly is ranked number five.

Al Bernstein previewed the fight for the Boxing Channel. He believes Cleverly is in for a very stern test against Kovalev.

"This is most assuredly the toughest test he has had in his pro career," Bernstein said.

Meanwhile, Bernstein called Kovalev's signature win over Campillo a tremendous win.

"Campillo...I think got some terrible decisions and should have been a world champion," Bernstein said. "And Kovalev just completely dominated him."

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Stalwart sportscaster Rich Marotta, President of the newly created Nevada Boxing Hall of Fame, chimed in on the fight via Twitter.

"Kovalev is there to be hit with the jab, and Nathan has a good one, but he'd better keep it in Kovalev's face all night," said Marotta.

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### **Bernie Campbell says:**

You guys are ignorant salesman! Travis Walker fights this weekend! And friggun Franklin Lawrence and Darnell Wilson! Go ahead put up 3 articles in a row of cat fights, you clowns don't know anything about fighting!

### **Bernie Campbell says:**

The fights I mentioned are next week and not this week! Its not Travis Walker that's fighting its Travis Kauffman! But I wanna know Why theyre pushing Geale's mug on the public? Barker is definitely the better fighter!

### **brownsugar says:**

Kovalov over Cleverly in a fight of the year candidate....Geale out hustles Barker.

### **brownsugar says:**

Cleverly is easily the craziest light heavy in the world..the most confident...or the most underrated. Either way..... I don't see how he can get past Kovalov..the most dangerous light heavy in existence....this will surely be the best fight fight on the card.

Maybe FOTY if Cleverly can hold up.

### **brownsugar says:**

Geale....please retire Barker

### **SouthPaul says:**

Excellent blue collar type action tonight on HBO. Well done job by the fighters and network. Cleverly, though, he's a joke. Back to the small time where he should've been all along...

### **DaveB says:**

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Since the acrimonious split up of GB and HBO both HBO and Showtime along with TR and GB have stepped up their games and have been putting on some great shows. I hope GB and HBO never get back together at this rate although I do wish TR and GB do get together to make some fights. Barker showed great heart. Three titles changed hands. What a great year so far for boxing. Makes me wonder what the next few months will bring. Not counting anyone out at this point.

### **brownsugar says:**

Agreed Dave... glad to see HBO finally embrace the international market...there are many great fighters to watch from all over the globe.

I take back what I said about Barker... never thought he could perform as consistently and aggressively as he did last night. And I certainly didn't associate him as a fighter who possessed that much heart. In my eyes the score should have been a UD or at least Majority decision in his favor. Barker showed excellent technique against the busy yet formless and often sloppy style of Geale.

### **DaveB says:**

You are absolutely right B-Sug. I never really thought about HBO reaching out to international markets but that is what is happening before our very eyes. I know you have always been a proponent of guys on the other side of the globe. I am too but not as much as you have been. I am seeing the light more and more each day. In this day and age we are being exposed to them more than ever before and that is always a good thing. Also on these boxing boards you're not as isolated as a boxing fan and your points of view are challenged therefore making you learn at least of defend your position and acknowledging the other guy might be right sometimes. Change can be good.

### **brownsugar says:**

Thanks Dave I can't be rigid with the TSS readers... you guys are too smart. Does seem like the rift between GB vs TR is creating better fights.