

Written by Adam Berlin
Friday, 11 February 2011 13:04



NEW YORK – So how does one pronounce “Dzinziruk?”

Just like it’s spelled, dummy: “sha-SHEV-ski.”

When the WBO junior middleweight champion visited B.B. King’s Blues Club in New York Wednesday afternoon he heard three different promoters mangle his surname in three different accents in the space of fifteen minutes, and if he took exception to any of them he did not betray his emotions.

On the other hand, over the course of his emergence from relative obscurity to the challenger’s role in next month’s middleweight title fight against Sergio Martinez, Dzinziruk’s first name has been spelled nearly as many ways as his last has been mispronounced, but TheSweetScience now finds itself in a position to set the record straight. Well, sort of.

His passport says his name is Sergi.

He prefers, and generally uses, the diminutive Sergiy.

Dzinziruk says he has no idea how that rogue “h” crept into the anglicized version of his handle, but John Sheppard of the authoritative website BoxRec.com, one of the original h-guys, offers an explanation.

“The problem is that we have non-English transliterations of Cyrillic names,” writes Sheppard. “His name is really Сергий, so the proper English version would be “Sergiy” or “Serhii.”

Which would seem to make more sense but for the fact that BoxRec continues to use “Serhiy.”

“It’s a can of worms,” said Sheppard. “I let the editors fight it out.”

“Anybody want to buy a vowel?” asked Gary Shaw, the more wearisome half of Dzinziruk’s US-based promotional duo. “Just call him the new middleweight champion.”

Now that Martinez has been relieved of his middleweight title (Sergio is now the “emeritus” champion, as in retired, although he has shown no inclination of retiring whatsoever), the WBC trotted out its latest trinket, the Diamond Belt, for display at BB King’s. (The one on offer March 12 will be the second such awarded. The other belongs to Manny Pacquiao, who by pure coincidence was stripped of the WBC 154-pound title that very day.) The new belt is allegedly encrusted with 500 precious diamonds, out of which, suggested Martinez advisor Sampson Lewkowicz, “Sergio could make many engagement rings.”

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Our request that we take the Diamond Belt five blocks uptown to have it appraised on 47th Street was roundly ignored. The Diamond Belt went straight back to Mexico City on the plane with Mauricio Sulaiman.

* * *

Kery Davis' nose appeared to grow about three inches in the less than five minutes he spent addressing Wednesday's press gathering. First the HBO vice president defended the cable network's insistence on Dzinziruk by saying that while the average American sports fan might not have heard of him, boxing fans knew all about him, which was pretty absurd. Until HBO started pressuring Martinez to make him his next opponent a couple of months ago, not even hard-core boxing fans had paid him much attention, and in fact until Shaw and Artie Pellulo started badgering him about the Ukrainian, we'd warrant that Kery Davis had never heard of him either.

And it was hard not to laugh out loud when Davis segued straight from his beatification of Dzinziruk into a rap about how pleased HBO was to have the Andy Lee-Craig McEwan co-feature as part of its telecast. Lee, you might recall, had been DiBella's preference as an opponent for Martinez on March 12, until HBO nixed the fight. Having committed to Lee, DiBella then made Lee-Johny Duddy as the co-feature, and in the end HBO took that one only after options on future Martinez defenses were thrown into the mix. Now they've got Lee-McEwan and we're supposed to believe they're happy about it?

The only authentic news emerging from Wednesday's news conference, in fact, was DiBella's confirmation of the already widely-circulating word that he had signed Lee to a multi-fight promotional deal. The significance of that development is that the prospect of grooming the Lee-McEwan winner as a future Martinez opponent could turn out to be more than just an empty promise.

As it has been for the past three years whenever Lee is around, the touchy subject of his 2008 loss to Brian Vera was the elephant in the room (though Vera's upset of Sergio Mora a week earlier may have served to incrementally upgrade that performance), and while no one actually invoked Vera's name, it was Lee himself who addressed the subject head-on.

In welcoming his HBO debut, the Irish middleweight noted that, thanks to manager/trainer Emanuel Steward, he'd gotten "massive" publicity and attention from the American public over the years, "the only fight of mine most of them saw was the one I lost."

Lee and McEwan have a history. They met as amateurs in a fight Lee won, but Steward noted that the pro game was a different animal and that the earlier verdict would have no bearing on what happened in the ring on March 12. The Hall of Fame trainer, who for five years had resisted all entreaties to tie Lee up promotionally before the recently-consummated alliance with DiBella, acknowledged that the promoter's arrangement with Martinez had been the key to the deal. Steward said that Lee had turned down title opportunities with both Dmitry Pirog and Felix Sturm to fight McEwan, based on the prospect of a Martinez fight down the line.

McEwan, who seems a nice young fellow, wore a kilt to lunch at BB King's, and briefly

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addressed the gathering in a thick Edinburgh burr that must seem even more out of place in the Wild Card Gym.

“I’ll be ready and Andy will be ready, and the best man will win,” said the Freddie Roach-trained Scotsman.

* * *

Lewkowicz is ordinarily one of the shrewdest men in boxing, but Martinez’ advisor may have badly overstepped his bounds at Wednesday’s gathering with what was probably a well-intentioned defense of the middleweight champion’s trainer.

Lewkowicz contemptuously assured one and all that the Boxing Writers Association of America’s election of Freddie Roach over Gabriel Sarmiento as Trainer of the Year had been the direct result of some “political” conspiracy. This should have been vigorously disputed, not reported as if it were some little boxing turf war.

Like Lewkowicz, Sarmiento had a very good 2010, and in our view would have been a legitimate choice. Had Lewkowicz gone off on the BWAA membership and accused them of wholesale stupidity he might or might not have been wrong, but at least he’d have been addressing a legitimately debatable issue. He likewise could have accused the voters into turning the Trainer of the Year vote into a popularity contest.

But in framing his accusation in the terms he chose, Lewkowicz really only allowed for two possibilities. One was that the BWAA voters had gotten together and stacked the deck in Roach’s favor because they reckoned his name value would sell more tickets to the May 6 dinner than Sarmiento’s would – a pretty preposterous contention when you’re talking about an organization that labors to find consensus about what day it was. The other was that, for essentially the same motives, the BWAA hierarchy deliberately overturned the result of a vote in order to give the award to Roach. Either way, it’s a pretty serious accusation, and one that shouldn’t have been taking lying down. But it was.

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brownsugar says:

interesting story. Kimball nearly makes a mundane press conference sound like a comic adventure... albiet an informative one.

Radam G says:

Martinez is kind of long in da tooth. He better take this bout seriously. He beat an unhealthy Kelly Pavlik. KP had been out of da game for a while from a MRSA infection, then came back and fought Marinez while being a drunk. He was probably not sober when he entered that squared jungle to take on Martinez. And anybody who knows an iota about boxing, knew that

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Martinez was not going to have trouble out of mega superhyped Long Tall Paul Williams. In actuality, this unknown, just-put-some-d*mn-alphabets-together-named dude, may just be Martinez's butt kicker. Martinez was in the right place at the right time, but he ain't a dime -- maybe an eight of nine. His light is most likely to dim, than to shine. Holla!

AskTheBoxer says:

I like Dzinziruk's jab... but that's about it. Sergio beats him easier than expected:

[url]<http://asktheboxer.com/bookies-and-businessmen/predictions-and-picks/281-martinez-vs-dzinziruk.html>

brownsugar says:

or the other way around