

One Step Forward, Two Sticks Back...WOOLY RINGSIDE IN GERMANY

Written by Phil Woolever

Sunday, 20 March 2011 19:53



KOLN, UNDER A CRAZY MOON - Vitali Klitschko's ballyhooed battle with Odlanier Solis turned out to be a flop.

The primary question in the fight's immediate aftermath regarded whether or not Solis did a flop himself.

To a jeering swarm at sold out Laxness Arena, and a gradually more diplomatic Team Klitschko, it seemed that way for a little while, although they immediately deferred to pending medical evaluation.

Was it the Hand of Fate or the hand of Klitschko? In the post fight conference, there was plenty of convincing to be done.

Right after the fight was waved off by ref Jose Garcia, Klitschko appeared to berate Solis for a perceived lack of honest effort. It wasn't exactly a freeze frame moment like Ali scowling over Liston, but it did indicate Klitschko is still pretty hungry.

"I felt it was a really hard punch," said a relaxed Klitschko after the fight with a somewhat sarcastic smile. "But not that hard. Not hard enough to break something. Now he has to go to the hospital and I wish him the best. I hope it is nothing serious."

The assembled swarm at Laxness Arena made more noise as they continued to berate Solis more than any German crowd in recent memory. The sullen, smirking countenance Solis either adopted or had scripted for the promotion came back to bite his behind.

From the puzzled look on his face, sometimes you couldn't tell if Solis really cared or not. Maybe it was too painful to think about.

Klitschko understood that another step in his personal legacy and his promotional portfolio were blemished, but he was also aware that overall the sold out night was another substantial marketing success. TV numbers will be typically impressive, and it seems like water cooler word of mouth will keep the Klitschko brand buzzing a while as the hype for Wladimir's meeting with David Haye gears up.

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In some ways, the crowd of 19,000 acted like Vitali's fluke win was a proper steamrolling. The masses alternated from jovial cheers to spiteful hissing as images of Klitschko and Solis rotated on the overhead monitors. K2 manager Bernd Bonte compared it to Mike Tyson dribbling Trevor Berbick. Nein.

Klitschko did make enough of a slugging statement for bragging rights.

Solis was probably winning the busy but low action round on the strength of some solid body work and a couple stinging straight rights, though Klitschko backed him up with thuds that landed anywhere for much of the session.

Suddenly, Klitschko snapped in a partially picked off right hand that tapped Solis on the temple. When Solis went down in delayed recoil, he immediately grabbed at his knee in a painful reaction and the fight was correctly halted when he couldn't stand straight.

The abbreviated climax was bitterly booed for a few moments, but as the crowd started to stream out and collect deposits on their plastic beer cups it seemed like forgive and forget mode was setting in.

Besides, despite a weak undercard the crowd stayed upbeat. As usual, the audio and visual effects were primo, if occasionally a bit indulgent. The fight was billed as "Im Schatten Des Doms", which roughly translates to "In the shadow of the cathedral," a reference to Cologne's historic church. The entrance video showed Klitschko ascending an inner staircase in his boxing robe. Things almost got ridiculous.

Then in the video Klitschko hit a church bell as the familiar, crowd-crazing AC/DC "Hell's Bells" intro blared and the real life Klitschko appeared. It was first rate theatre that will play well for years longer if Klitschko decides to keep going, which seems unlikely for more than another year or so.

Maybe Klitschko was upset because he knows this was one of the last few fights in his campaign.

Euro-pop rockers "Roxette" did a good job getting the place pumped for the main event, which came after a long night of suds, many in oversized, "Oktoberfest" style mugs. As usual at a German fight card, despite amazing amounts of drinking (many ride trains home) there were no drunken jerks to be seen.

What fight there was in the main event had enough action to stand alone, for better or worse. It was what it was.

"I was nervous in the first round because he caught Vitali a few times," admitted younger brother Wladimir.

The card was definitely a very hot ticket, with people roaming the nearby surrounding streets for possible extra ticket holders. Hundreds of happy bystanders waited around a wide red carpet

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seeking to take smart phone photos of celebrities from the North Rhine region. There was an uncommonly high ratio of women and families, and numerous pairs or groups of females who came unescorted.

The elder Klitschko, now 41-2 (39), may be expanding his own demographic base. It doesn't seem like he can improve his punching power, which still seems evident. Klitschko has learned to get great leverage with off beat, straight arm hooks and short pile drivers, exactly like the punch that did or didn't damage Solis, 17-1 (12) depending who you talk to.

"It was only my knee, nothing Klitschko did," said a grimacing Solis. "I was able to take his punches and hit him back, but I had bad luck and can't do anything about that."

Subsequent dispatches from University Hospital in Cologne reportedly show Solis indeed suffered both ligament and cartilage damage. He was seen leaving the hospital Sunday morning using crutches. Manager Ahmet Oner was quoted regarding further immediately upcoming tests.

Whatever it was, it tripped up Solis' run at the top of the hill, probably for a while. He's now a high risk, low reward signing for other top contenders.

From the looks of those sitting on the K2 side of the podium, Solis shouldn't hold his breath about another Klitschko fight, either.

Maybe we can blame this crappy result on Saturday night's ultra-full, so-called "Super Moon" that floated closer to earth than usual and glowed above a festive, frosty fight scene.

Something certainly effected understandably upset Oner, who left the postfight conference then burst back in screaming wildly at any insinuation Solis wasn't ready to win the contest. A frantic Oner had to be repeatedly restrained. Meanwhile, Bonte sat calmly at the podium like he was waiting for a tuxedo fitting, and continued to press Oner's buttons.

Judging from the energy emitting within the strands during a limited period of observation it seems like the fight was waged, however briefly, at a respectably elite level.

Solis came to fight, but what he brought was not enough to win.

Klitschko has maintained his level of excellence although he didn't get the chance to show it. There was discussion about the possibility of another appearance in May or June, depending on available optional opponents. Otherwise, there's that September date with Tomasz Adamek, who has to be thinking about how to avoid looking like Solis.

With all the intense events going on around the globe these days, Klitschko-Solis was by no means a noteworthy disaster. It was nice that Klitschko solicited donations for Japan relief, and when Michael Buffer called for a moment of silence before the fight you could sense one of those strange, brain stem level human vibes. There have been many such public observations around Germany these days, and maybe that more than anything made it easier for the fans to

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keep perspective.

"He was a respected opponent with an excellent amateur background. I am proud to have recorded another knockout. How this happened is not my concern, it is another win. The only thing I hope is that Solis isn't badly hurt."

Tonight, a lot of folks either showed up or tuned in with high expectations.

A couple of them, bigger than the rest, were named Klitschko and Solis.

They're probably the ones who are most disappointed of all about what happened "Im Shatten Des Doms".

Too bad for almost all involved that "La Sombra" was forced, for whatever reason, to remain in the shadows.

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mortcola says:

Just watched slo-mo replay of the temple shot. It made NO contact with the glove; not partially blocked; it looked like not-much, but landed directly on the soft spot of the temple and snapped Solis' head around, after which his leg's locked - which happens occasionally when there's a sudden neurological incident; and his already-injured knee then gave out. Solis was not moving, torquing, sliding, shifting, at all - he got hit, and then the legs locked and gave out.

I think criticism of Solis' performance is unfounded. He didn't quit. No basis for that. His WEIGHT is an issue, a big one; his decision to come into a championship fight with a hair-trigger injury is shameful.

BoxAnne says:

for going in with an injury, but maybe not entirely reasonable--fighters and other athletes perform with injuries all the time, sometimes for years. Yuri Foreman isn't being blamed for going down to a previously injured knee, so why is Solis being blamed? He apparently won previous fights with it with no problem, just real bad luck it happened at that moment. I read elsewhere that the knees locked when the K's jab got him in the temple (and they did appear to stiffen), sometimes apparently a neurological result of even a fairly mild shock to the brain, and it was the fact that they locked that prevented the usual swivel/torque compensations an unlocked knee, even a weak one, could usually handle. Just a "perfect storm" situation for his knees. It's not that I'm some kind of Solis junkie at all, really don't much favor the heavyweight division overall, just doesn't seem fair to blame him for this--his doctors must have passed him on it as well.

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Radam G says:

Dang! WOW! The GOAT Ali blasted the holy snot outta the late Sonny "Night Train" Liston. Da suckas crashed like a muthawreck. When a person get popped upside that noggin on the temple or a dimple, he collapses. His knee doesn't shake or go stiff. If the punch is of delayed effect, the fighter walks a bit and still collapses without trembling from the knees. Solis's knee was short-circuited by a giant's knee. Solis's knee bumped into Doc Vitali's knee. [Maybe Doc VK used his knee for that hammering on the knee that doctors do to test your leg reflexes. Besides, knee bumping is one of the oldest tricks of the trade.] Solis's boney knee could not hold up under all of that blubber, so he bounced down like a overstretched rubber. And then he grabbed the wrong knee, and got up slowly signaling with his body language that he didn't want to fight. The tomato can -- NO! supersized tomato can -- QUIT! Lennox Lewis is spot on. Solis quit, and took the money and ran. The powers that be should take it back, let Solis's exaggerated injury heal, make a rematch and pay Solis double if he fights. In all the history of boxing -- those are plenty of films to watch -- when you see a person banged upside da noggin, he start doing the chicken dance, but his dang knee doesn't locked. Solis QUIT! He ain't no rabbi to be, and he's definitely not a FOREMAN -- Yuri or Big (Rev.) George. Holla!

mortcola says:

Hey-Rad - There are many flavors of dizzy. You saw a new one that night.