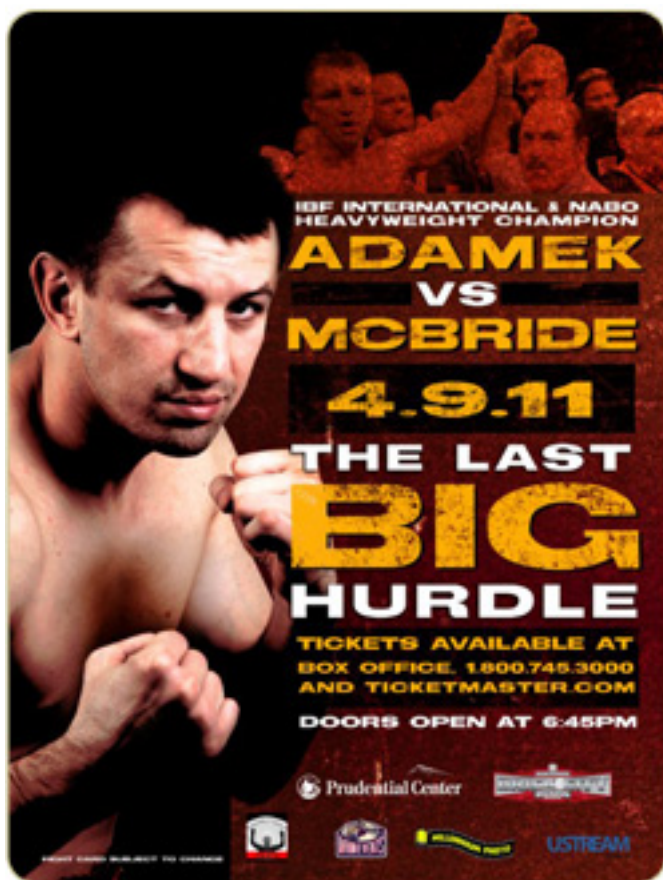


Written by Ron Borges
Friday, 08 April 2011 13:13



The danger is that you don't see any danger. That, more than anything else, is the risk of tune-up fights.

Many a fighter has gone to the arena thinking he was going to a high-paying sparring session. Future plans had already been made. Assumptions came with them. The opponent who stood between those assumptions and reality is easily dismissed. Then the first bell rings and he turns out to be unwilling to be dismissed. He is more than you thought he'd be.

Or maybe he is what you thought he'd be but you are simply less. Ill-prepared psychologically or physically for a sterner challenge than this guy was supposed to provide.

That is the biggest danger for heavyweight contender Tomasz Adamek Saturday night when he steps into the ring at Newark's Prudential Center in front of a raucous and highly partisan crowd against an aging Irishman whose moment came and went in an instant six years ago and nothing has happened in between but a battle with the bottle and five losses in his last six fights.

Adamek, a former light heavyweight and cruiserweight champion, is one more victory away from an agreed to September fight in a 62,000-seat soccer stadium on the Poland-German border

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against Vitali Klitschko. Klitschko is two years older and two inches shorter than 6-6, 280-plus pound Kevin McBride, who Adamek faces next for two reasons: he's big and he's not dangerous.

Or so the people around him think.

On paper they would seem to be right. Although McBride did knock out Mike Tyson in 2005, it was more a case of Tyson imploding and quitting on the floor because McBride was being unreasonable in his willingness to absorb punishment and at least trying to fight back.

McBride broke Tyson's will not with his punching power but with the resiliency of his chin and his spirit, two things he will also bring to Newark on Saturday. While McBride himself may not be considered formidable, those two character traits are.

Adamek is saying the right things of course. They always do. He may in fact mean them and if he does McBride is in for a long night.

But if Adamek has been spending his time with visions of Klitschko rather than McBride in front of him, he has a problem. If he thinks he will come in and quickly dispose of McBride that too is unlikely not only because of McBride's ability to absorb punches as if he were one of those Joe Palooka blow-up punching bags but also because Adamek, truth be told, is a blown up light heavyweight himself who has gone the distance with Jason Estrada, Chris Arreola and Michael Grant, three guys who are hardly the flower of heavyweight boxing.

One could rightly argue they are all superior to McBride but that is not the point. The point is what does Adamek believe?

"Fighting Kevin McBride is a good test for me," he said recently. "Size, yes it is very important, but not the (most). I'm not short, but when I am fighting I'm moving my head, bending my knees, moving side to side, being flexible, making it hard to touch me. With every fight I think it gets more difficult to hit me.

"I do not look past McBride or take him for granted. This is boxing, one punch can change the situation. Just one punch can change everything. This is my test before Klitschko. I respect McBride. "

Sure he does. Adamek is 43-1 with 28 knockouts. He is a former world champion in two weight classes. He is one night away from fighting for the heavyweight title in his native country. He respects Kevin McBride about as much as the American military respects the Peruvian military.

They have guns and ammunition so attention must be paid. But not too much attention and not for too long.

It is hard to avoid slipping into that kind of thinking for a fight like this. McBride is 38 years old and had been doing occasional work as a street paver when not serving as a stay at home parent for his two young children when his friend and advisor Jerry Quinn called to tell him they

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had just been offered an unexpected opportunity.

McBride had not fought in 2 ½ years before coming back last year to fight in the British reality show "Prizefighter." He split two fights, both three round exhibitions on the same night. The second was a disputed one point loss to Matt Skelton. Nothing that happened that night or any night since he beat Tyson so long ago pointed to an opportunity like he now has.

"When I got off the phone I went right out and ran in the streets like Forrest Gump in the movies," McBride (35-8-1, 29 KO) said. "This was me second chance. It only takes one punch to change the chapter."

True, but few think McBride carries that kind of megatonnage. A ponderously slow mover and a puncher whose attack comes in wide, arching waves that often seem more slaps than snapping shots, it would be difficult for Adamek to study McBride and not come away convinced his superior hand speed, boxing ability and professional pedigree are not enough to carry the night quite convincingly and, frankly, quite easily.

It would be human nature to think that way. It might also be a mistake.

"A lot of people say 'Why do you fight before the Klitschko fight?'" Adamek said. "You know every fight is a danger but I can't stay home with nothing to do. I need to practice. This is my way. It will only help me prepare."

McBride is not in Newark to help Adamek do anything but lose a date with Klitschko. He is here in the classic spoiler's role, a fighter few boxing people give even the slightest chance to win.

That, Adamek's promoter knows, is what makes him dangerous.

"This is a very important fight and we've seen lots of fighters in this situation look past the guy in front of him," Kathy Duva of Main Events said. "In this situation, Tomasz is putting a lot on the line. This man (McBride) pretty much made a name for himself by scoring one of the biggest upsets ever and ending Mike Tyson's career. We are not taking that lightly at all and nor should anyone else."

No they shouldn't but that doesn't mean they aren't.

"Training camp was very peaceful," trainer Roger Bloodwirth said of his seven week stint in the Poconos with Adamek. "It allowed us to focus, cause we're not taking this man lightly at all. Anybody that takes a 6-foot-6, 270 pound man lightly, well he needs to be hypnotized."

The latter was a reference to McBride's advocacy for being hypnotized by a sports psychologist in recent weeks to eliminate doubt and focus the mind. He did the same thing before Tyson and on a night when he was a bigger underdog than he will be on Saturday, McBride finally hypnotized the youngest man ever to win the heavyweight title until he simply collapsed to the floor in frustration, a broken man from the combination of McBride leaning his left against him and refusing to acquiesce.

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It was that unexpected refusal on McBride's part to willingly play the role he'd been hired for that broke Tyson. Can the same thing happen to Tomasz Adamek?

You wouldn't think so and it probably won't...just as long as Adamek isn't among the people thinking like that.

[Comment on this article](#)

DaveB says:

Anything can happen, especially in a heavyweight fight, but I don't think it will happen just because it can. I think Adamek is too professional and frankly too good for that to have more than a slight chance of happening. Adamek by stoppage or lopsided decision.

brownsugar says:

DaveB correctly says a slight chance... as in..... Haleys Comet, a Solar Eclipse, and Great Balls of Lightning happening at the same time... McBride has less than a chance than Mosley and Morales,.. 2 1/2 years off,.. 38 years old.....McBride could be 7 foot 6" weight 400 lbs and Adamekcoming off a drunken orgy the night before ,...Still he wouldn't win... This article is a masterpiece of satire.. written with an astutely journalistic poker face that any high-roller in Vegas could admire... I'm checking my bloodline now to see if I have any Polish decendants... that's the only way I'd watch this fight.