Written by The Sweet Science
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It says as much about the sad state of heavyweight boxing today as it does about the skill and appeal of Wladimir Klitschko and David Haye that their July 2 settlement meeting in Hamburg will be the most anticipated heavyweight title fight in nine years.

Not since Lennox Lewis squared off with Mike Tyson on June 8, 2002 and beat him senseless could the word “anticipation’’ be used to describe the general public’s view of any boxing match involving the carousel of champions who have populated the heavyweight division since Lewis’ retirement, but this is the moment. Whether that proves patience is a virtue, all things come to those who wait or fooled you again remains to be seen, but at least Klitschko-Haye is a heavyweight title fight that begs to be seen.

Perhaps a few diehards might say that was the feeling before Lewis faced Klitschko’s big brother Vitali a year after the Tyson fight but that would be rewriting history. After the elder Klitschko fought bravely and with resolute determination against a less than well prepared Lewis many wished they’d paid the event more attention but in the days and weeks leading up to it few expected it would be anything but what it ended as – which was a bloody win for Lewis after he gouged a hole in Klitschko’s eyelid deep enough to store all your Easter eggs inside.

Truth be told, no one but Klitschko looked at that fight with “anticipation’’ until HBO ran the replay. That night he saw the fight as an opportunity but the world saw it…well most of the world didn’t see it, which is the point.

But Klitschko-Haye has both international appeal and a story line that should sell the fight in the

US if properly marketed even though it will not be contested here. It will be fought where it should be fought, in the 55,000-seat Itech Arena in Hamburg, an outdoor stadium big enough to jam in Klitschko's many German and Ukrainian followers as well as all of Haye's British loyalists.

Haye, a former cruiserweight champion before winning the WBA heavyweight title a year and a half ago, is a showman with a flair for the crass and the dramatic. The fact that he can punch like a wrecking ball makes those other skills saleable.

Klitschko (55-3, 49 KO) will be making his 11th defense of the IBF and WBO titles he first laid his hands on in 2006 and because of that is generally considered the best heavyweight in the world unless you ask his family members, who would probably say that title really belongs to Vitali.

Both have said they never intend to settle that issue, which only goes to show that despite ample evidence to the contrary there is a level beneath which not even boxing will not sink. (EDITOR NOTE: Oh but wouldn't some promoter be willing to put aside conscience, and stage Klitschko vs. Klitschko? So really, I think boxing could sink to that level, if the Klitschkos gave the all clear, LOL). Since Klitschko vs. Klitshko will never happen, Klitschko vs. Haye is the best alternative, one that has been proposed several times before but was skirted by (depending on who you want to believe) Haye, Klitschko or their various handlers.

Klitschko The Younger is more technically sound than Haye but the WBA champion is the more explosive puncher. Although both can do considerable damage it is Haye (25-1, 23 KO) who seems the more likely to deliver a one-punch knockout while Klitschko is most often content to work behind his heavy jab and straight right hands, inflicting extensive damage over time.
In other words, they both have a puncher's chance and no one but their staunchest allies can be sure which of them has the best chance. That air of mystery is what makes the fight intriguing and lends the word "anticipation'' to any description of how the public will view it.

It brings an interest to the division not seen since Lewis-Tyson because there is a whiff of danger on both sides. Each has shown concussive power and each has shown enough weaknesses to be viewed as vulnerable to such power. That is what brings tension and interest to a boxing match, most especially in the heavyweight division.

One-sided walkover bouts, which both Klitschko and Haye have been part of since winning portions of the heavyweight title may please German promoters and British fight fans but they do not attract wide-spread interest and attention. Klitschko-Haye should do that because they are generally believed to be the divisions' two best heavyweights (unless you favor Vitali) yet each comes with enough fragility to be seen as putting himself at risk.

In the end, that is all fight fans ask of their champions. They want to see skillful fighters or heavy-handed ones take a risk. They want to see in them not only some form of greatness but a willingness to prove that greatness. Regardless of how this fight ends, the perception going in will be that both have fulfilled that requirement.

Finally it seems both realize there is no longer anywhere else to go. No more Samuel Peters or Chris Arreolas or Audley Harrisons. No one but each other is left, which is what fight fans have been longing for since Haye won the WBA title from Nikolay Valuev by majority decision.

That was a lackluster win to be fair but Haye is such a showman and such a puncher that the boxing public was willing to ignore it if he ended up with one of the Klitschkos. After lambasting aging former champion John Ruiz and Olympic gold medalist Audley Harrison in his first two title defenses, Haye understood the time for his incessant threats to maim the Klitschkos had passed. It was time to fight or fade into the woodwork.

Long claiming to be in search of the Klitschkos, David Haye has finally found one of them. If he can dethrone him he will have set up an even bigger payday for himself and for boxing with Klitschko's big brother but it would be unwise for him to get ahead of himself. Come July 2, David Haye will have his hands full with Vitali's little brother. Fortunately for fight fans, the IBF-WBO champion is in the same boat with David Haye.

Comment on this article

FighterforJC says:

There's absolutely nothing sad about this match up. David Haye marketed himself well enough to actually capture the public's imagination. People want to see him pull off the improbable but there are just as many who'd like to see his mouth get shut. Also, Haye is a much livelier underdog than Tyson was against Lewis and while it may turn out to be just another Klitschko fight, more experts are giving Haye a chance than Holyfield had against Tyson in the first fight. Haye will most definitely be a bigger threat to Wlad than Michael Spinks was toTyson over 20 years ago. So this is a great matchup and a bright moment for the sweet science, that two top fighters in their prime are meeting to unify the titles. There's enough intrigue in this fight to warrant a buy.

the Roast says:

I am agreeing with the FighterforJC. This is a great matchup. The two best heavys out there, besides Vitali of course. Everybody and dey momma knew that Tyson had no shot vs Lewis.

Big Daddy says:

I'm kinda excited about for this fight.. Hopefully the HayeMaker comes out Guns Blazin'. It'll make for a more interesting fight and its his best chance. Just ask Corrie Sanders. If it goes past 5 rounds w/o Haye putting Wlad at least one time on his ass.. It's gonna be gonna be Game Over.

ultimoshogun says:

I'm kinda rooting for Haye in this one...not because i'm a fan, but just so we can have some drama in the HW division for a change...If Haye wins maybe we get a trilogy between him and Wlad, or maybe big bro comes after Haye looking to avenge lil bro's loss.

DaveB says:

It would be good for boxing if Haye could win. I just hope it is a fair one with the best man winning however that happens. The Brothers not fighting just makes things more boring in an already boring division. I definitely wouldn't ever want to see them fight one another. It is just bad when the two best can not fight. Haye has the tools but he cannot get touched by Wladimir or the night is over. Movement is key so that either one of the Klitschkos cannot dictate the distance and pace and power to get their butts out of there.

FighterforJC says:

I don't see the big deal with Wlad and Vitali fighting each other. It's a sport, and there's no way they're gonna kill each other or even seriously hurt each other. Come on they've fought bum after bum and all them guys came out alright, so would they should the face each other.

the Roast says:

Big Daddy is right. Hopefully Haye will come out swinging for the KO, not running like he did against Valuev. If David doesn't get Wlad early, Wlad will definitely pound him late. I think it's gonna be all Wlad. Speaking of Valuev, whatever happened to his #1 fan Leroy Peters? I enjoy the work of Red Peters but I dont think they're related.

DaveB says:

Beating up family is not cool. Besides their mom said they couldn't. She might end up beating the hell out of both of them. Now if you say they should fight their mom I give up.

FighterforJC says:

Wlad and Vitali should fight their mom.

the Roast says:

You so crazy!!!!!

DaveB says:

I give up!!!!! You win.