Written by Phil Woolever
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June 3, 2011, Los Angeles, Ca. --- (L-R) Unbeaten WBC Middleweight Champion Sebastian Zbik of Germany and #1 contender Julio Cesar Chavez Jr., Culiacan, Mexico pose during the weighin (Zbik 158.8 lb, Chavez Jr 160 lb) at Staples Center in Los Angeles for their upcoming WBC World Middleweight title fight. Zbik vs Chavez Jr. is promoted by Top Rank in association with Zanfer Promotions, Universum Media Network, Tecate and Staples Center and will take place on Saturday, June 4 at the Staples Center in Los Angeles and be televised on HBO Boxing After Dark. --- photo by Chris Farina

NOW OR NEVER - If Sebastian Zbik had achieved his initial goal for this summer, his upcoming opponent would be consensus world champion Sergio Martinez, not Julio Cesar Chavez, Jr.

Zbik, who came in for the Chavez fight at 158 3/4, deserves credit for trying to prove himself against the best potential foe, just like his German countryman Sergi Dzinziruk did in previously coming to the States for better competition; though Dzinziruk eventually got creamed by Martinez last March.

Rumbling reality indicates very strongly that the 29 year old Zbik, 30-0 (10), faces a similarly disappointing disaster should he get his wish to face Martinez.

That's not necessarily the case at all against Chavez, 42-0 (30), as Zbik prepares to defend the WBC belt upgraded from previous alphabet "interim" status without having a fight.

If this now is Zbik's trial by fire, at least it's not the most major blaze. The same can be said from conservatively promoted but excellently marketed Chavez's corner, where they are not attempting to wrest a crown from a proven champion.

Zbik is well respected in Germany, but the Chavez name carries weight even along the Rhein and Junior gets the benefit of unseen doubt as a seemingly slight favorite.

Zbik and Chavez have each compiled undefeated records against standard tutorial type opposition. Neither has beaten a foe in the legitimate top 10 to 15 range. Chavez's resume of usual Southwestern suspects is less suspect that Zbik's list of European pugs.

Now is time to step up to the big league leather for both.

Having seen Zbik fight a couple of times in Western Germany during '08 - '09 and Chavez Jr. on a few occasions during his early Vegas grooming I would lean toward Zbik winning a mechanical, sloppy decision.

Considering the Fred Roach factor and Chavez Jr's maturing, I 'd pick 25 year old Chavez winning a mechanical, sloppy decision.

Considering that this is Zbik's first fight outside the European region, in Staples Center where a noisy crowd should erupt at the strains of anything Maraichi-like, it's not any Pacific Coast Highway stretch to envision Chavez scoring a stoppage over a too tentative Zbik.

If Chavez does indeed roar out and break Zbik down by reaching around with well schooled hooks that crumple the too inflexible titlist, Top Rank's PR ace Lee Samuels could have a field day with side-by-side father son body shot images.

Zbik will probably throw more punches in the first couple of rounds. What happens during the 3rd an 4th, after Chavez and Roach have a chance to adjust; could determine the fight.

If Chavez does get the win, the biggest immediate question becomes how much more he might be protected. Don't count on ever seeing him against Martinez.

For Zbik, a slight underdog in this affair overall, the horizon could soon hold a much bigger

payday and a higher international profile than Zbik has yet experienced.

Win or lose, depending on his showing; Zbik might still get his previously attempted match-up with Kelly Pavlik. If he beats Chavez impressively he could even see Martinez across the ring this year after all.

At this point though,without more of a punch, realistic odds against proven, elite fighters remain against Zbik even if he stops Chavez, which is unlikely. For Zbik, a big win at Staples would quite likely be the highlight of his campaign unless he beats somebody like Arthur Abraham back home in Germany. Zbik appears to have just about reached his peak potential, and we'll soon find out if that's enough to keep a belt.

On the other gloved hand, Chavez will probably continue to improve win or lose. Again, the Roach factor.

For many observers on either side of the ocean, Chavez or Zbik have yet to display a level of prowess which even indicates they could be competitive against a fighter like Martinez even if they fought as a tag team.

Still, the amount of dismissive diatribes againt either fighter are excessive. There's no doubt that both men have put in the training hours and absorbed the pounding it takes to reach headlining status in a high-profile bout, whether the bout sizzles or fizzles.

Few fight observers believe either boxer is the best, or even near the best boxers at 160 pounds. Its no certainty that Zbik or Chavez could top undefeated junior midleweight Vanes Martirosyan, who meets gamely travelled Saul Roman on the undercard.

At least Saturday night in LA is a real shot for both Zbik and Chavez to prove themselves.

Thats all either one have been asking for.

Comment on this article

the Roast says:

I've never seen Zbik fight. Not even a clip. Since Jr. usually fights on those unworthy PPVs, I havent seen him fight since he had that draw. I look forward to seeing whats what and I hope its a great fight.

brownsugar says:

Chavez has 2things going for him, Zbik's inactivity and the benefit of training at the wild card gym. All other categories go to Zbik. Zbik is a natural boxer with tight defense and is quick with the 1, 2, counter punches....he's a bit of a cutey who moves in and out to deliver crisp but

powder-puff combinations. (Zbik's punches make little sound)...Chavez is not that bad and is finally learning to use distance, mobility and precision punching under the tutelage of Freddy Roach. Chavez will also be emboldend by the fact that Zbik can't punch that hard... I'm picking skill to beat will. I bet 2 coconuts on Zbik in a close UD.

the Roast says:

Thanks for the scouting report Brownsugar! I hope its good. I guess it would be good for boxing if Chavez Jr is a good fighter and not just riding the last name but I wont hold my breath.

B REAL says:

It was a decent fight to watch...BUT i still think Chavez is still really sloppy and needs alot of work to contend with A fighters. Itl be interesting to see who they pick for him to defend his title. Chavez has good heart and thatll take him far if he stays with Roach.