The final press conference to hype Saturday's clash between Wladimir Klitschko and David Haye today in Hamburg yesterday, and I admit I didn't think we'd get to this point.

I thought by this point in the promotion, Haye would've slipped in the tub and pulled out his back, or sustained a "rib injury" during sparring. To his credit, that hasn't happened. Unless there is a shocker of a situation, and there is an 11th hour "injury," fight fans will get what they've been wanting for two years. Check that, one of the fights they've been wanting to see; the big one, Manny-Mayweather, hasn't come to fruition yet. And while I've been underwhelmed by the wattage of the buzz here in the Stats for this tangle, that doesn't mean I won't wake up Saturday morning with that pre-big-fight-buzz.

You could sense the genuine animosity in the air as Wladimir got his turn at the mike in Hamburg. He promised to make Haye eat the infamous "severed heads" t-shirt he wore two-plus years ago after the Saturday clash. He called Haye "princess" while chiding him for being a half hour late for the presser.

"I believe David Haye is not such a bad guy...the way he acts, the way he talks, the way he does certain thing..I believe since you became champion, since you beat Mormeck in France...you got a certain attitude which is not so good for your life, not only in the ring but also outside of the ring...I believe it's gonna be a good lesson for you on July second in the ring. I know you're in good shape, I know you're prepared, I do respect you as a fighter, not as a person," he said.

He said he'd give Haye "reality rehab" treatment, and would knock him out, which would teach him a lesson in humility. He referenced Haye's refusal to shake his hand. Presidents did, Muhammad Ali, Max Schmeling, Mike Tyson, Dalai Lama, all these folks shook his hand, Wlad said. For his disrespect, he will be KO victim number 50.

Wlad toyed with Haye, tortured him with a psychological assessment, saying he refused to shake his hands, and wore sunglasses in his presence, to mask his fear.

Haye then took the mike. He admitted he knows many thought he'd pull out with an "injury," and then said come fight night, he'll show a new strategy and tactics than he's shown before. He's taken to calling Wlad a "big robot," and said he's totally healthy ahead of the gig. "I'm so happy the fight's happening now and not a couple years ago because I'm so much of a better fighter now," Haye said. "I cannot wait to get in there and do what I'm gonna go. Myself and trainer Adam Booth have constructed what I believe to be the perfect gameplan to beat Wladimir. He's stuck in his rigid ways..he gets stuck in his way, he can't flow, can't change, can't adapt like I can." He then plugged his iPhone game, skillfully, and said we'll see in the game what we'll see in the fight, before promising a knockout defeat.

Wlad's trainer Manny Steward called this bout the second biggest deal of his career, after his guy Lennox Lewis met Mike Tyson in 2002. He said Wlad has been charged in the leadup to the event but "cool." Manny said he does respect Haye as a fighter and won't assume that the Brit has an iffy chin. I think that chin will seem iffy around round five, when he eats a right he doesn't see after being blinded by a Wlad jab.

The two fighters took questions from the press after they talked. The most interesting portion came after they talked, when Vitali asked Haye to show up at the press conference after the fight. Haye answered, "I hope you show out, and don't go with the ambulance." Wlad didn't care for that attitude. Haye busted on Wlad, warning him not to take in any "poisoned water," which was a reference to the allegation after Klitschko-Brewster I in 2004 that Wlad had been given tainted water, which doped him up. Haye made the card, if you were scoring the presser, that much closer with that crack.

They did a two minute staredown, and whispered nasty nothings at each other, before parting ways.

My take: Haye wasn't alltogether convincing. His words sound hollow, flat, robotic. Now, it would be the best thing for boxing if he beat Wlad. The Klitschko stranglehold on the division has sapped all drama from the supersized weight class. A Haye win would inject life into it. Of course, I will find it hard, when watching as a fan, to root for the guy who makes flippant jokes about gang rape, and fought like a rabbit, alternately fiesty and scared, when he won his title, via majority decision, from Nicolay Valuev in November 2009.

I see Haye using similar tactics against Wlad, and see Wlad not departing much from his winning ways. His trainer Steward thinks that the big Ukrainian may be fighting with a bee in his bonnet on Saturday, but the Klitschkos are where they are because they are two of the most mentally disciplined guys in the sport today. Wlad, especially, rebuilding himself after being outed as chinless and stamina-free wonder by Corrie Sanders and Lamon Brewster...that is a stunning achievement. Watch Wlad Saturday and you will see him setting the tone with the jab, sizing Haye up for several rounds, before mixing in some "twos" after the "ones."

My prediction: Wlad by TKO in round six.

SPEEDBAG: I asked my older daughter Annabelle, age four, who would win, Wladimir or Haye? I pointed at the image attached to this story. She pointed to Wlad, and said he'd win. Why? "Cause he has those," she said, pointing to his three title belts. Makes sense to me...

Comment on this article

Radam G says:

Wow! I can't get that interested in this snoozefest. Hayemaker is Big on the mouth, and Doc WK is big on the bod, but both of these bums are a bit short on the skills and excitement. In yesteryears, they would not have made good sparring partners for even Jerry Quarry, Gerry Cooney or Jerry, my Saint Bernard. But let Hayemaker spit it, "this is gonna be a good fight." He even claims that he is "gettin' a hard on!" WTF! Dude is always lumping his boksin' with sexin.' He said that his last opponent would get a "one-man gang rape [beatdown]." Wow! The heavyweight division is bunk [sic] and full of junk! I don't know what the ex-USSR Red is gonna do to the Redcoat. I'm reminded of the 1980s when people were saying, "I rather be dead, than to be RED!" I guess that is on the outside though. Aren't we red like muthabloods inside the bodies. I'm just waiting for the next heavyweight superstar to come straight outta ASIA. Yall musta' fo'got! And don't let me tell ya' what TYME it is UP IN HERRE [sic] Holla!

deepwater says:

Deepwater is back and the first post I make has to disagree with woods. Haye by easy ko. very easy.

the Roast says:

Nice to see the deepone but no, no, no! Wlad by crunching KO in the 8th!!

brownsugar says:

Deepwater in Da Hoooouuussse!!...YAY!!!,..... Haye is sure looking thin for this fight... even his face looks different. Wlad came at the right time.... to rule as the biggest fish in the smallest heavyweight pond in history...but he's still a very good fighter..... There are at least 4 new giants on the way to redeem the heavyweight division, younger faster bigger and much less Robotic. But none of them is going to save Haye on saturday.. Has anyone played FEAR3... it's hard to make it thru a level on your first play-through on normal-mode without getting killed, the offense is everywhere... it takes extreme concentration and planing (or just crazy dexterity)to make it out alive..... That's what Haye is going to feel like from the opening bell. Klitschko is coming out for the murder/death/kill..... RunRunRun...Haye.... and don't stop till you see the perfect shot!!! It could be over in round 3 but if WK gets stuck, gets meserized, and allows Haye to plan his attack while stalking him from a seeminly passive position from the outside... Haye is capable of pulling off the Miracle on Hamburg Street (or whatever street it's called)by dropping a 50 megaton nuke in the "Fatherland".... .. the atmosphere and tension is going to have viewers forgetting when to breathe... untill the first blow is struck. I'm eating my popcorn and downing my beer BEFORE the fight starts..... I'll take Haye by Divine Intervention.

mortcola says:

Guys, especially Deepwater - the robotic characterization doesn't hold up. It is a tactic, an approach, not his nature. If you watch the early fights, he was a smooth moving, combination punching fighter who mixed a "European" stance with a fluid, two-handed attack. The "robot" is a recent development, part of the "iron" discipline that enabled him to regain control of the ring and his own mental state during his comeback from the KO losses. The athletic ability and all-around boxing skills are part of the repertoire; if Haye thinks the robot is all Wlad is as a fighter, he is walking into a bad place. On the other hand, if Wlad's chin is poor and if he suffers another anxiety attack when he gets nailed or tired, then, robot or no, the fast, hard hitting Haye can take him out. To me, the biggest difference in this fight, even more than the size, is that Haye, for all his athleticism, has fought very, very few world class fighters, and NO worthy heavyweights. People are overlooking the fact that while Klitschko has utterly manhandled every heavyweight of every style, ducking not a single one, Haye hasn't even fought one of them. Not one. When I read them saying that they're coming into the ring with a whole new bag of tricks, it tells me that Haye wasn't even close to being ready as a complete heavyweight to begin with. When have you ever seen a guy come into the biggest fight of his life with a whole overhauled style and secret weapons, and have it actually work? If anything works, it is going be, like I wrote in 2009, that Haye lands a fast bomb and cracks the chin. It won't be anything subtle. Bet a few bucks on it, if you want, but the smart money is that the Dr. Neutralizer has Haye fighting like a deer in the headlights, and ending up like that deer.

brownsugar says:

just saw the press conference. WK looks like he's done this a thousand times before... Haye.....

although he did plenty of cracking wise didn't seem to have the usual energy... WK said the Daling Lama shook his hand why can't Haye? ..... Haye said he's going to short circut the robot then did an impersonation of someone being subjected to high voltage. Vitali even jumped in and asked Haye if he was going to the press conference after the fight.... it was somewhat entertaining. Stewart sitting back with a grin... And Haye playing to the crowd... EM's commentary was spot on.. Hope Haye can at least make a good fight of it. 2 years in the making...better not end like one of Mike Tysons early contender fights... (KO in 1)

Grimm says:

Wlad by late TKO (rd 11-12), as the ref don't want the large TV-crowd to see a semi-unconscious man get his bloodied and swollen face get smashed over and over again. The key factor has somewhat been lost in the buzz (the buzz in Europe, that is): Wlad is a way better boxer, a master at controlling the distance - and the distance, and disability to close the distance, is what makes it so hard for his opponents to beat him. Now, Haye does indeed have the speed, explosivity and the balance to close that gap and get within his punchzone, but a focused Wlad knows that, will be aware of that, and knows that by the middle rounds, that ability will be gone. And that is when the systematic beat-up truly will begin. Hayes ability to talk the talk has nothing to do with his ability to walk the walk, which has'nt - let's not forget - been proved against anyone worth mentioning in the same sentence as Wlad. Beating up cruisers and dead meat-heavyweights don't say nothing about his ability. Wlad, on the other hand, is set to be looked upon as one of the truly dominant och great champions in due time, but as many a great boxers before him has learned - it will take time.

Radam G says:

I'm hoping for a draw. Of course by double knockout. It would be nice to see these glass-chin chumps kayo one another. I got a question. How much blood will we see? You know with David being a Redcoat, instead of having a slingshot, and with Doc Wlad being an ex-Russian Red Army doc. I personally think that you guys are hoping for too much. This is going to be one sorry-arse boring bout. And it may end in a kayo. I believe that the Redcoat has a better chance of kayoing the ex Russian Red Army soldier/doctor. But you guys will see it and I will hear it. I won't waste my eyes watching it. I have a date at the Black Jack table. I gotta wash my winning hands. And get dat moola. Holla!

michaelabii says:

Quite right Mortcola. The resumes simply cannot be compared. However, I was watching a few of those less than stellar fights that Haye has had and you cant deny that this guy has astonishing power in either hand. If you blend that type of power, speed and timing with Hayes confidence I really think you have the makings of an upset. Vlad is not going to walk this guy down with a long jab and right cross. He is going to have to rumble with quick combinations. The tapes show that Haye is especially quick with his counters from different angles. He is very adept at turning his punches. Vlad will not be fighting a 2011 version of a prime Tyson but at the very least he will be faced with an opponent who really believes he can win by knockout. Vlads chin will be tested as will Hayes. Both men have gotten up from knockdowns to win fights. I

expect a barn burner with Haye tiring somewhere around the 9th but I have this nagging feeling that we could be looking at a spectacular upset. Who knows ??

brownsugar says:

Hayes' done more than that...He got Klitschko back on HBO.

mortcola says:

Corrie Sanders was a freakishly fast southpaw power puncher, fighting a Klitschko who had never been attacked like that before, and had had his way in all his fights except the Puritty fight in which he just wore out. Klitschko can do one thing only? Are you kidding? That point isn't even debatable. Guy has as many tools as he could possibly need; he has used them conservatively since the KO losses. but I don't think you know the fighter at all. I will grant you the questionable chin, and questions remaining about how he handles it mentally when someone gets through his defense; a long unbeaten streak of one-sided victories leaves that question hard to answer. But your technical analysis is pretty lame.

FighterforJC says:

I think Haye's success is heavily dependent on one of two things. Number one, that Wladimir is actually a fraud whose opponents were somehow coerced by means of death threats, bribery or getting drugged to lose every round to Wladimir all these years, and that David Haye will be the first one to be able to resist the bribes and threats that previous Klitschko victims succumbed to. Number two, the fact that just about every dominant fighter in history had a nemesis who gave him fits for sometimes inexplicable reasons, and that David Haye wll turn out to be that fighter for Wlad.

Condor says:

Mortcola, as always, a superb, erudite, and fact-based analysis.

Haye's best performance at heavyweight was his win over the badly faded John Ruiz. His victory over Valuev was extremely controversial, as he fought [B]terrified[/B] all night. He landed a good shot in the 12th, but that was it. Valuev stalked and stalked and lumbered all night, but simply lacked the speed, agility, and athleticism to land anything. This will be Haye's game-plan again. If he wouldn't engage the slow, plodding, and light-hitting Valuev, you can bet he won't engage the murderous punching and sneaky quick Klitschko.

My rooting interest in this fight is for boxing. Let the heavyweights become relevant again. Boxing is flat out better when the heavyweights matter. That said, I think the highly motivated Klitschko will win this by punishing KO in round 3.

amayseng says:

i dont know,, i just see wlad getting knocked down and out in these youtube clips from his past

losses...they werent even thundering mike tyson shots, just solid blows, not even from fast or blazing punchers...haye has good speed and power along with angles, i think if haye hurts wlad at all anytime he can get him out...wlad can lift weights, he can run miles, he can improve his jab, but he cant strengthen his glass jaw...if he gets buzzed he will get scared and look bad trying to tie up and hold onto a smaller, smaller man..

deepwater says:

w klitco was knocked out by corrie sanders who they found drunk on a golf course. boxing is 90% mental. haye has won the prefight mental games which leads me to believe he has the mental edge in the fight. haye can box and move or punch on the inside. klitco can do one thing.nothing more. bet anyone on here a beer. and not some watered down coors light. I want a double ipa.

brownsugar says:

Hey Mortcola hows it going... I really appreciate your measured comments about the K brothers... keep it comin...

the Roast says:

I love to see Grimm in the house. Love that pic. Hey Grimm, do you know Mats Wilander?

Grimm says:

[QUOTE=the Roast;7532]I love to see Grimm in the house. Love that pic. Hey Grimm, do you know Mats Wilander?[/QUOTE]

  Hehe, thanks. No, I don´t - but I've been in his hometown, a small place that actually produced world class players during the 80's like ants produces eggs. Wilander, however, never became a national hero in the way Borg did - or, for that matter, Ingemar Johansson.

mortcola says:

You could be right, Michaelabii. Either Haye's speed, angles, and power overwhelm Klitschko, who loses his scientific precision....or, since we're not looking at the second coming of a prime Tyson, we end up with something similar to the 2002 Tyson who fought Lewis, and a tactically similar fight. A shorter, explosive fighter who can come unstuck and who has little experience adjusting his attack to a large, prime, ring-general with power, coming up short and wild and getting nailed, growing increasingly discouraged, hesitant, and imprecise. See, all the Haye virtues are hypothetical ones, all achieved against much smaller men, and against lumbering, not-particularly-dangerous, and/or fragile and over the hill heavyweights. Klitschko has mostly mastered the fear from his previous KOs, and has mastered the techniques that let him control the ring; but the pro-Haye bet is that he is the one fighter who can do what no one has even come close to doing, for even a moment, in the past five years. Maybe he can - but he has never had to anything remotely like it in his career, and he has to do it against a huge,

technically adept, power-punching heavyweight who has already come through the fire and slain lots of his demons. A Goliath with a complete technical arsenal and considerable intelligence, who people keep criticizing as one-dimensional and robotic, ignoring the reality of what keeps happening whenever he gets in the ring. Part of the beauty of the game is one well-timed shot can crumble all of that - Cooper/Clay, Snipes/Holmes - and sometimes a small, speedy guy can come close - Conn/Louis. Ali and Holmes had great chins, and Klitschko doesn't. My money is on Klitschko. But I call it as close to even money as any fight of K's career.

michaelabii says:

Great analysis mortc ! I think the highlight of the Haye/Vlad fight this weekend is that there is a renewed interest in the heavyweight division - if only for this one fight. It really boils down to this though; there are more things that Vlad can do to win this fight and there are less things that Haye can do. In other words its Vlads fight to win and he could really make a statement by stopping Haye early and showing a desire to rumble. I have seen clinical executions from the big guy but come Saturday I think the boxing fans really want to see this guy show a desire to really put some hurt on Haye. Knowing how Manny Steward operates I believe he is coaching Vlad to start fast and hard - backing Haye into corners and unleashing body and head shots from long range and never letting Haye get set as they say in boxing speak. Haye has given us something we have not had in a long time - a heavyweight fight to look forward to despite the long odds against him. Thank you Mr Haye !

deepwater says:

HEy Mort. The one thing klitco does is jab jab grab. boring safety first sportsman.not a fighter. ask freddie roach about that. Roach wouldnt make that up. tell me all of klits attributes if you will

mortcola says:

I watch the fights. Not hard to do. Youtube, dude. What he often does is jab, jab grab, jab, jab cross hook, KO. What he used to do, prior to the Sanders loss, was jab, move, cross, hook, pivot, slide....you know, boxing....then drop the bomb, resulting in 49 KOs in 55 wins. More methodical now. Same result. We'll see Saturday what he is willing and ready to do against a slippery, hard hitting Haye.

Condor says:

Let's not forget, Haye's got chin issues himself. This isn't Ray Mercer/Oliver McCall we're talking about here. Haye was hardly intrepid when facing the closest thing he's seen to Klitschko in Valuev (their similarities end at size). However, Haye does deserve credit for dominating Ruiz in the manner he did. Even at the end of his career, JR's a tough guy to look good against. Maybe Haye's bona fide. Who knows? But the question remains unanswered as he hasn't exactly taken the Holyfield/Moorer or even Adamek path to a title shot from cruiser/LH. My gut instinct is that Klitschko recognizes that this is his moment, and I think he'll be ready. Even if you absolutely hate the man, the guy's a real pro. Olympic Gold in 96, 15 years as a pro, and

undefeated in the last 7 years, which has clearly been his prime. He fought, lost, and learned from those defeats.

We'll see, should be electric.

the Roast says:

[QUOTE=Grimm;7535]Hehe, thanks. No, I don´t - but I've been in his hometown, a small place that actually produced world class players during the 80's like ants produces eggs. Wilander, however, never became a national hero in the way Borg did - or, for that matter, Ingemar Johansson.[/QUOTE]

Don't be a stranger Grimm. Boxing and Tennis have alot in common. One on one. Players from all corners of the globe can shock the world if they got game. Borg was the first tennis rock star. Did you see Fire and Ice on the HBO?

ultimoshogun says:

Well, I can only hope Klitschko has "murder/death/kill" on his mind as brownsugar states, that's what made me a fan when he first arrived on the scene. Before the KO losses Wlad was a guy who fought to win, he has since become a fighter who fights not to lose. It's hard for me to predict how this fight will actually play out, i'm just hoping they both come to fight and are not too scared to engage. That being said, i've always been an optimist and believe this fight will be a good one, we might even see multiple knockdowns in this one. I'm thinking Haye will use his quickness to get in and out while landing pot shots most of the night until he lands a home run shot that sneaks past Wlad's guard ala Rahman vs Lewis....My prediction, Haye lands the Hayemaker in rd 9 for the KO win.

deepwater says:

klit cant fight on the inside. klit has a glass jaw. klit is mentally weak. klit sounds like borat. no coincidence that interest in boxing has been on a decline ever since these two guys came on the scene.whether haye wins or loses he brought at least some interest back to the premier division.

Robert Curtis says:

I see both these guys as safety fighters. If Wlad were up against anyone besides this noisy dwarf in corn rows, Wlad would jab, grab and be very conservative with his hands, at least until he knew Haye was tired or hurt. I expect Haye will run all night like he's at a track meet. If all he could do was run from a plodding Shrek like Valuev, what makes anyone think Haye will hold his ground against someone with actual skills like Wlad? There be a lot of running early on. As Haye's legs fade, Wlad will increase his aggression. Wlad KOs Haye round 9. The only upset will be in my stomach.

FighterforJC says:

[QUOTE=Robert Curtis;7583]I see both these guys as safety fighters. If Wlad were up against anyone besides this noisy dwarf in corn rows, Wlad would jab, grab and be very conservative with his hands, at least until he knew Haye was tired or hurt. I expect Haye will run all night like he's at a track meet. If all he could do was run from a plodding Shrek like Valuev, what makes anyone think Haye will hold his ground against someone with actual skills like Wlad? There be a lot of running early on. As Haye's legs fade, Wlad will increase his aggression. Wlad KOs Haye round 9. The only upset will be in my stomach.[/QUOTE]

Valuev and Wlad are two different fighters with different styles. Besides being significantly larger than Wladimir and several inches taller, Valuev has a pretty solid chin that allowed him to keep pressing forward like a glacier closing in on Haye. Haye will have much better leverage against Wlad, who is "merely" 6'6" to 6'7". So to answer your question, there are other factors besides Wlad having "actual skills." Styles make a huge difference. Haye is no bum. He has speed and power and he moves extremely well around the ring. He has the stance and center of gravity of a middleweight. He has the ability to keep Wlad in his crosshairs, which cannot be said about any of Wlad's previous opponents.

I'm making no predictions but IF Wlad wins, I think he will knock David Haye out with a left jab. It will be a stiff kind of jab with a jousting effect that Haye will run into and have a slight delayed reaction before stumbling backwards a few steps, turning around and falling on all fours. He'd be able to get up if he wanted to but he will stay down and get up just in time for the count to reach ten.

ali says:

[QUOTE=amayseng;7518]i dont know,, i just see wlad getting knocked down and out in these youtube clips from his past losses...they werent even thundering mike tyson shots, just solid blows, not even from fast or blazing punchers...haye has good speed and power along with angles, i think if haye hurts wlad at all anytime he can get him out...wlad can lift weights, he can run miles, he can improve his jab, but he cant strengthen his glass jaw...if he gets buzzed he will get scared and look bad trying to tie up and hold onto a smaller, smaller man..[/QUOTE]

Damn good post I agree 110%.

ali says:

Man this is a hard fight to call but for some strange reason I think Haye is going to beat Vlad. I just think Haye speed and ability to use angles is going to a big problem for Vlad. If Haye can land that counter right hand over Vlad jab he will without a doubt win this fight but that's a big if.

GerardMcL says:

Haye by KO in Rd6. Haye with over hand rights over Wlad's jab all night long. Watch for quick lateral movement and when he hits once Wlad goes into his shell and it becomes a matter of time.

Grimm says:

[QUOTE=the Roast;7562]Don't be a stranger Grimm. Boxing and Tennis have alot in common. One on one. Players from all corners of the globe can shock the world if they got game. Borg was the first tennis rock star. Did you see Fire and Ice on the HBO?[/QUOTE]

Indeed a rock star. Not seen it, but saw all their great games during their primes. Thing is, no matter how good you are, all great generals need a worthy opponent to define their own greatness: Borg vs McEnroe, Ali vs Frazier & Foreman, etc. As for Wlad, that's been his problem - and may still be, if he beats Haye too convincingly. It's hard to be king in a vacuum.