

Klitschko-Haye and Bouie Fisher...HAUSER

Written by Thomas Hauser
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It's time to revisit that region of purgatory known as boxing's heavyweight division.

A critic might say that Wladimir Klitschko vs. David Haye set the sweet science back forty years. But that would place boxing in the halcyon days of Muhammad Ali vs. Joe Frazier. Better to say that Klitschko-Haye did nothing to lift the sport's flagship division out of the doldrums that it has been in since Lennox Lewis retired seven years ago.

Klitschko-Haye was built on Haye's mouth; not his boxing skills. But once the bell for round one rings, it's impossible for a fighter to bullshit his way through a prizefight. Either a fighter is there to fight or he's there to run. Haye was there to run. When the moment of truth came, his resolve faded. He was elusive and not much more.

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Putting the best face on things, David's fans could say during the early going that he was fighting a cautious tactical fight. But by the fourth round, the horrible realization set in that this would be twelve rounds of boredom.

There was no way that Haye could beat Klitschko from the outside, but he was content to stay there for the entire fight. He fought like a man who simply wanted to make it through the fight without taking much punishment, collect his paycheck, and go home. Over the course of twelve rounds, he landed a meager six punches per stanza.

Meanwhile, Klitschko fought like Klitschko. He landed (count them) zero body punches during the entire fight and an average of 2-1/2 "power" punches per round. A viewer who didn't know that this had been advertised as a fight between two of the three best heavyweights in the world and watched with the sound off could have been forgiven for thinking that he'd tuned into an encounter between inartistic club fighters.

Klitschko prevailed on a lopsided unanimous decision. Afterward, Haye complained that he'd broken a toe on his right foot three weeks before the bout and couldn't push off properly on his punches.

That ranks with "I hurt my pinky."

Vitali Klitschko will defend his version of the heavyweight title against Tomasz Adamek in Poland on September 10th. That fight will have more action than this one but be just as one-sided. People are fond of saying these days that the American heavyweights suck. Except for the Klitschkos, the European heavyweights aren't very good either.

Meanwhile, Klitschko-Haye was reminder that, in boxing, a good jab and a straight righthand beat a big mouth.

And let's acknowledge the fact that, while Wladimir has flaws as a fighter (including, possibly, a

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cruiserweight chin), there are things that he does very well. If boxing fans are going to praise Floyd Mayweather Jr for his defensive skills, Klitschko deserves credit too.

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The boxing world lost a treasure on June 30th with the death of English "Bouie" Fisher.

Bouie was best known for taking a 25-year-old ex-con with an 0-and-1 record and molding him into the middleweight champion of the world. His relationship with Bernard Hopkins soured when the mega-dollars started rolling in and Bernard decided to cut his longtime trainer's end of the purse. They split bitterly, reunited, then split again.

During good times, Fisher said of Hopkins, "When it comes to boxing, Bernard isn't old; he's old school. Bernard is a throwback fighter when it comes to dedication in and out of the ring. Boxing never leaves his thoughts. He lives, eats, and dreams boxing. He puts in the work that's necessary to be great. I know a thing or two about growing old. And I can tell you that no one grows old overnight. As long as a fighter is properly conditioned, his age won't show all at once. You can see a lot of things with old eyes if you've been around boxing a while. Young eyes aren't always as good."

Then came the split, and Bouie noted, "Bernard is a very difficult person to deal with. He wants all the glory. He wants all the credit. He wants all the money. It's all about him, him, him. At one time, Bernard was like family to me. But my family has been raised and taught to be respectful and kind to other people; and Bernard just isn't that way. Bernard thinks money is everything. Money is good to have; you need it. But it's not everything. Right and wrong matter. I believe that, if you do right, everything will be fine. When you do wrong to other people and then try to justify what you've done, you wind up lying because the truth won't help you."

Yet in the end, Fisher said reflectively, "I had a nice run with Bernard. It could have been better here and there. But I'm proud to have been with Bernard. I think he's one of the best middleweights since Sugar Ray Robinson."

Bouie was a gentleman. He adhered to the view, "In boxing, there's always people saying bad things about other people. So I say, 'Protect yourself at all times and mind your own business.'"

Some other thoughts that he shared with this writer over the years follow:

* "Boxing is a great sport. It will always be a great sport. It's not easy; that's for sure. There's nothing easy about boxing. There's plenty of heartache. A lot of tears have been shed in this business. But I'm proud to have been part of boxing history."

* "Too many times, when you try to tell young men something today, they become resentful and don't want to listen. They say, 'What's this old gray-haired guy talking about!' And I tell them, 'You know, I didn't just dye my hair gray. I earned my gray hair. You should go out and earn yourself some gray hair too.' But what makes me want to pull my gray hair out sometimes is when a young man with all the talent in the world doesn't want to do the work and make the sacrifices that are necessary to reap the rewards that his talent can bring him."

* "Becoming a great trainer takes years of knowledge and experience. Some of the trainers who people call 'great' today aren't even good. They were just placed in great situations. I'm still

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in school with boxing. No one ever learns everything there is to know about boxing.”

* “I've had my glory. I've seen my children grow to be good men and women. I raised eight children in the middle of the ghetto and didn't have two hours of trouble with any of them. All my children finished high school and have good jobs. Four of them graduated from college. One of my daughters has been voted 'outstanding teacher of the year' two times at her high school. Another works with retarded children. Now I'm sending my grandchildren to college. Right now, I'm sitting in my home, looking out the window at the sun melting the snow. This afternoon, I'll be in the gym teaching some young kids how to slip a jab. Everyone should be as happy as I am now.”

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