

Curtis Stevens Wants Another Title Crack

Written by The Sweet Science
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Atlantic City, NJ: The Stevens-Majewski fight scheduled for Friday, January 24th on NBCSN live from Resorts Casino and Hotel in Atlantic City, NJ marks the first of many explosive middleweight match-ups awaiting boxing fans in 2014. The red hot middleweight division saw some memorable bouts in 2013 and is jam-packed with exciting champions and contenders that will produce some wild match-ups this year.

Gennady Golovkin is arguably the top middleweight fighter in the world and in 2013 he showed the world why with four wins all coming by knockout (Gabriel Rosado, Nobuhiro Ishida, Matthew Macklin and Curtis Stevens). In 2014, the WBA champion is expected to face some tough contenders starting with his fight against Osumanu Adama in February.

WBC and lineal middleweight champion Sergio Martinez defeated Martin Murray in Argentina in April 2013 but was sidelined due to injuries for the rest of the year. He is expected to face former three-division world champion Miguel Cotto in June. Cotto, for his part, will seek to make Puerto Rican history by dethroning the champ to win a world title in his fourth division.

WBO champion Peter Quillin also defeated *Fight Night* alum Gabriel Rosado in 2013 in a controversial tenth round stoppage. It remains to be seen what the WBO champ will do in 2014.

After successfully defending his IBF title four times, Daniel Geale lost his belt to Darren Barker in August. Barker then lost to former WBA world champion Felix Sturm in Germany in a stunning second-round knockout. Sturm had previously lost the WBA title - that he successfully defended for six years - to Geale in 2012 via a split decision loss. Geale is scheduled to face Garth Wood in February from Australia but has been calling for a rematch with Sturm for a chance to reclaim the IBF title.

The would-be contenders for the middleweight crown begin their campaigns for a title shot on Friday, January 24th from Resorts International Hotel and Casino in Atlantic City, with the much-anticipated fight between Curtis "Showtime" Stevens and Patrick "The Machine" Majewski. The Stevens-Majewski fight will be a "put up or shut up" fight for both men as both are coming off recent defeats.

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Stevens lost his last fight at Madison Square Garden to Gennady Golovkin. Stevens has taken the shortest break of any of Golovkin's 2013 KO recipients since his eighth-round knockout in November before getting back in the ring again. When asked about the match-up Stevens said, "It's time for me to get back in the ring." He added, "It is my goal to eliminate all of the middleweights in the division and get another crack at the title; I am ready for anything Majewski might throw at me. When I get in the ring there will be no overthinking, I am just going to do what I do best."

Majewski lost via unanimous decision to Patrick Nielsen in twelve rounds in September after winning four in a row dating back to April 2012. "The Machine" said, "I need this big challenge. I realize winning this fight against Curtis Stevens can push me up in the ranks of the middleweight division. I do not intend to fail, believe me I have been training and studying very hard and I am ready to pass this test."

NBC Sports Group's *Fight Night*'s play-by-play announcer Kenny Rice said, "I think this has the potential to be a very interesting fight. We all know that Curtis Stevens is a supreme KO artist. A decent proportion of Majewski's wins [52%] have also come via knockout. I think the two of them feel they have a lot to prove in this fight." He added, "Stevens will want to reestablish himself in the middleweight division and Majewski will see this as a vehicle for solidifying a position in the division. There are a lot of good scenarios that can develop when you have two hard hitting guys; we could be in for some fireworks."

Both men will come out swinging with something to prove on the 24th. In this tough middleweight division a loss for either fighter could mean they will get lost in the shuffle of contenders looking to move up the ranks - including Patrick Nielsen who has yet to make his US debut, David Lemieux fighting out of boxing hot spot Montreal and Marco Antonio Rubio who is the WBC's mandatory opponent and is awaiting his shot at Sergio Martinez following the Martinez-Cotto fight in 2014. Other middleweight challengers include former champions Darren Barker and Daniel Geale and past contenders Martin Murray, Matthew Macklin, Andy Lee, Sam Soliman and Bryan Vera. Upcoming prospects include Max Bursak and Danny Jacobs.

B.J. Flores, NBC's boxing analyst said, "Curtis was on nobody's radar two years ago and now people definitely know the name Curtis Stevens. He came on with Main Events, fought on NBC three times and the next thing you know he is fighting Golovkin, the best middleweight in the division. Not everyone can bounce back from a loss like that; Curtis has a lot to prove in this fight." He went on to say, "This fight against Curtis will be Majewski's chance to step up and get on the middleweight map; if he wants a chance at a title he needs to beat Curtis. It is a make or break fight for both guys."

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Boxing fans and networks can mix and match any of the champions or contenders in the middleweight division for a heart-stopping fight. This level of parity and excitement is what makes for historically great boxing. The sport has not seen a batch of potential middleweight stars like this since the 1980s with Sugar Ray Leonard, Marvin Hagler, Tommy Hearn and Roberto Duran. It is also reminiscent of the great heavyweight division of the 1990s including Evander Holyfield, Mike Tyson, Lennox Lewis and Riddick Bowe. And it all begins live from Atlantic City on Friday, January 24th on NBCSN *Fight Night*.

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