

Snips and Snipes 23 November 2017

Between Tyson Fury, Tony Bellew, David Haye and all of the challenges thrown out by Joseph Parker and Deontay Wilder they have kept the heavyweights in the news. It seems certain that subject to a hearing next month and to assurances that Fury's past medical problems have been resolved Fury will return to the ring next year. Fury will need a couple of fights before he is ready for Anthony Joshua or Deontay Wilder-although Fury's team may disagree, but a Joshua vs. Fury fight would be huge if Fury can get a couple of wins. A recent poll indicated that the fight some fans want to see when Fury returns to the ring is Fury vs. Shannon Briggs. That's a 45-year-old who has twice been suspended for positive tests and since losing to Vitali Klitschko in 2010 has not fought anyone who would qualify for a place in the top 50 heavyweights. I guess there is no accounting for taste. David Price may be vulnerable but he seems a better choice.

I may not be in the majority but I feel sorry for both David Haye and Tony Bellew. Haye must despair of these injuries. He needed that return fight with Bellew to get into the running for one last chance at another world title shot and Bellew has lost another good payday. Time is not on Haye's side. He needs to be in 100% condition but how hard can he push himself in training knowing that he is injury prone.

Heavyweight action will see Alex Dimitrenko return to the ring in Hamburg on 22 December. No opponent named yet. The 6'7" (201cm) Ukrainian has a 40-3 record with the losses to Eddie Chambers, Kubrat Pulev and Joseph Parker. Winning the IBF International title in his kayo of Adrian Granat has landed him a No 8 position in the IBF ratings so he is in the picture but very much in the background. Swedish hope Granat will also be on the bill against Georgian Iraqi Gvenetadze as he rebuilds after the loss to Dimitrenko. Unbeaten German super welter Sebastian Formella (16-0) will also be on the show.

Here's one heavyweight fight to miss. Alex Ustinov and Manuel Charr meet for the vacant secondary WBA heavyweight title on Saturday in Oberhausen. That's a 40-year-old Ustinov who has had only one fight in almost two years and that against a guy ranked No 247 in the world and Charr who was knocked out by cruiser Mairis Breidis then had eight months out after being shot four times and has not had a fight for 14 months. Secondary just does not fit the bill. How about farcical, or ludicrous? The WBA farcical title that seems to fit the bill.

Heavyweights Andy Ruiz, Robert Helenius and Tony Yoka have also been in the news. Ruiz will return to the ring on February 3 next year. No opponent named for him. The main event will see Gilberto Ramirez making the third defence of his WBO super middle title against Ghanaian Habib Ahmed. What a pity Ramirez is not in the WBSS tournament. His is the only big name that was missing from the super middles section. Ruiz has been out of the ring since losing a majority decision to Joseph Parker for the vacant WBO heavy title in December. Things have passed him by in that time and he is now down at No 15 with the WBO. A poor reward for taking Parker to a majority decision in Parker's back yard. He deserves a return. He is No 4 with the WBC. Helenius is not retiring despite his loss to Dillian Whyte in October. The Finn has said that his performance against Whyte was badly affected by a bout

of flu during his preparation and is determined to fight on. Anything Yoka does is big news in France. The Rio gold medal winner fights again on 12 December against Belgian champion Ali Baghouz. A very strange choice as Baghouz was knocked out in one round by Martin Bakole Ilunga in Edinburgh on 11 November. As late as yesterday Baghouz was still the name in the frame even though it will be just five weeks since that crushing loss. It makes you wonder how much confidence Yoka's team have in him and why a major French TV channel should agree to show such a poor match. Yoka is the draw but also on the bill will be Rio bronze medallist Souleymane Cissokho who captained the French boxing team in Rio, unbeaten Nordine Oubaali and unbeaten Cape Verde-born southpaw Michel Tavares. Well we now have the date and venue for the George Groves vs. Chris Eubank Jr WBSS semi-final. On 17 February in Manchester these two will meet in a clash that might not have happened if it was not for the incentives in the WBSS rewards cupboard and it is one where it is hard to pick a winner. No date or venue yet for Callum Smith vs. Juergen Brahmmer but let's hope it is not held in Germany. No dates or venue yet for the Murat Gassiev vs. Yunier Dorticos and Olek Usyk vs. Mairis Briedis fights. Usyk is the favourite for the tournament but Briedis has shown in wins over Olan Durodola, Manuel Charr, Marco Huck and Mike Perez that he is a very live outsider.

In addition to these fights for next year it looks like 5 May in Las Vegas for Gennady Golovkin vs. Saul Alvarez II The first one did not live up to expectations so let's hope this time they get it right and make it a fight to remember unlike the last which was a fight to forget.

Obviously the winner of the 16 December Billy Joe Saunders vs. David Lemieux fight will be hoping for a shot at the winner of Golovkin vs. Alvarez but with that fight not happening until May and with Daniel Jacobs, Jermall Charlo, Ryota Murata and Sergiy Derevyanchenko (IBF No 1) all queuing up nothing is certain in this division The WBC have already paired Charlo against Hugo Centeno for their interim title. If Alvarez wins don't expect him to accept the WBC title.

The WBC seem to have recaptured their appetite for interim titles-you remember that was the title that Jose Sulaiman said was causing too much confusion and they replaced it with the Silver title-and then more silver titles and more silver titles-and kept the interim titles. The interim super feather title will go to either Omar Salido or Miguel Roman who clash of 9 December in Las Vegas. A good fight. It would be nice to see "Mikey" Roman win a title at the third attempt but Salido is a tough nut.

Of course we have real biggie on the same night in New York in Vasyl Lomachenko vs. Guillermo Rigondeaux . This will be the first time that two fighters who have both won two Olympic gold medals will fight each other. Both fighters are talented and technically brilliant so I hope we don't get a tactical chess match. Lomachenko's WBO super feather title will be the only title on the line and not Rigondeaux's WBA super bantam title. Rigondeaux has not weighed more than 122lbs for a fight since back in 2009 and he won all of his amateur titles at bantamweight. Lomachenko won both his 2011 World Championships gold medal and his 2012 Olympic gold at

lightweight so is naturally the bigger man. I go for Lomachenko but just hope it is a classic.

Ghanaian Isaac Dogboe gets his chance at a title at the Bukom Boxing Arena in Accra on 6 January when he faces Cesar Juarez for the interim WBO super bantam title. Dogboe won the English ABA title and represented Ghana at the 2012 Olympics. With home advantage he has a good chance against Juarez who lost on points for this title to Nonito Donaire in 2015 but put himself in line for a shot at champion Jesse Magdaleno with a kayo of unbeaten 26-0 Albert Pagara in July last year. Magdaleno is injured so hence an interim title.

The news is not as good for another Ghanaian fighter as Richard Commey's IBF eliminator against Roman Andreev has fallen through. The respective parties had reportedly come to an agreement that prevented them going to purse bids. However as part of the agreement Andreev's promoter was to deposit \$55,000 in an Escrow agreement. That did not happen so now Commey's team are waiting for the IBF to nominate another fighter to face Commey.

When a sanctioning body orders an immediate return for a title fight just remember that they probably have their fingers crossed behind their backs. After Milan Melindo retained the IBF light fly title with a controversial decision over Hekkie Budler the IBF ordered an "Immediate return". In Scotland we have the double positive really being a negative so if a Scotsman says "Aye that'll be right" what he is saying is I don't believe a word you say. So what about Budler's immediate return. Well Melindo will defend his IBF title in a unification match with WBA champion Ryoichi Taguchi in Japan on 31 December. Budler will get first shot at the winner-provided it is Melindo. If Taguchi wins then the WBA and Taguchi might have other ideas but you can trust the IBF to fight hard to get Budler his promised fight for their title. Aye that'll be right. The Prizefighter formula is still alive and well. The next Prizefighter style tournament will be in Dublin for middleweights and will be staged in March. Applicants are already coming forward but no official announcement yet.

How time flies. On 5 January in Denmark a show is being held to celebrate Mogens Palle's sixty years of promoting boxing. The main fight is to be Lolenga Mock vs. Dmitri Chudinov. Denmark has never had a deep well of boxing talent to draw from but Mogens has continued to find and build Danish and other Scandinavian boxers able to compete at the top level over the whole of those sixty years. I still remember the days of Palle vs. Mickey Duff when there were some classic Danish vs. British clashes. He took fighters such as Ayub Kalule, Tom Bogs, Johnny Bredahl, Jorgen Hansen, Mikkel Kessler and so many others to the tope and brought fighters such as Carlos Monzon, Emile Griffith, and Ken Buchanan to Denmark. He was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2008. He will be 84 in March but no sign of him leaving the sport.

Under the Sergey Kovalev vs. Vyacheslav Shabranskyy fight on Saturday Cuban Sullivan Barrera takes on the awkward Felix Varela. At stake for Barrera here is a proposed fight for the WBA light heavy title against Dmitri Bivol pencilled in for February/March in New York so no slip ups if Barrera is to get his first shot at a world title. His only loss was a points defeat by Andre Ward in March last year.

With Kerman Lejarraga's fight with Jose Del Rio for the Spanish welter title in Bilbao drawing over 11,000 spectators the Basque country is suddenly very interested in boxing. The aim now is to get the 24-0 Lejarraga a fight for the European title against champion Mohamed Mimoune. The date they are looking at for a fight in Bilbao is late March. That March date may not be achievable as Mimoune's team are already in negotiation with the team of Ahmed El Mousaoui for a title defence. The last time there was a European title fight in Bilbao was 1981 when Tony Sibson outpointed Andoni Amana.

Former IBF light champion Eduard Troyanovsky takes the second step on his way back to a title shot when he fights 21-0 Carlos Portillo in Moscow on 17 November. His 40 second blow out by Julius Indongo in December was one of the biggest upsets of 2016. Troyanovsky made a good start in July with a fourth round kayo of former European champion and WBA title challenger Michele Di Rocco. Also on this show Russian heavyweight Sergey Kuzmin faces his first real test against Amir Mansour.