

## **Snips and Snipes 13 September 2018**

Finally it is here Golovkin vs. Alvarez II. All of the trash talking is over and the most anticipated return fight of the year, perhaps for many years, will be over by Sunday morning. The bad feeling between the two fighters is genuine and so is the difficulty in predicting who will win. I slightly favour Golovkin so Gennady is my pick, but my dearest wish is a fight worthy of the occasion and a clear undisputed winner. Under this great fight David Lemieux vs. Gary O'Sullivan promises mayhem with Lemieux looking down the slope if he loses and O'Sullivan hoping to get a fight against the winner of Golovkin vs. Alvarez. There is also Jamie Munguia and Roman Gonzalez fighting good level opposition. Munguia an exciting talent and he will be looking to blow away 20-1 Canadian Brandon Cook to build on his impressive power shows in wins over Sadam Ali and Liam Smith. Roman Gonzalez will be having his first fight for a year and be trying to salvage his career with a win over experienced Moises Fuentes. Two losses in the space of six months against Thai Srisaket saw Gonzalez fall from high in the Pound-for-Pound rankings to being dismissed as over the hill.

It has been good to see some big fights announced and confirmed or in the case of Deontay Wilder vs. Tyson Fury seemingly all systems go with only the final details regarding date and venue to be announced-hopefully. December 1 or 8<sup>th</sup> have been mentioned as possible dates. Both fighters seem to have made concessions Tyson by agreeing to the fight being held in the USA and Wilder to a 50/50 purse split.

There is some scepticism over whether it really will take place so let's hope we see very soon a date and venue set and tickets on sale. Of course Wilder vs. Tyson is bigger than Anthony Joshua vs. Alex Povetkin. The winner will have a strong hand when it comes to bargaining for the Joshua fight next year but both Wilder and Fury know that what they are engaged in is basically an eliminator with the winner going on to face Joshua next year for a "Money Mayweather" level purse. If Wilder vs. Fury does not come off then both fighters will have to scrape around trying to find another significant fight this year. Who knows perhaps the WBC might even insist Wilder fights the winner of the 22 December fight between Dillian White and Dereck Chisora. Of course if Povetkin beats Joshua then it's a different ball game as the winner of Wilder vs. Fury vs. Povetkin instead of Joshua won't have the same significance or the same money.

The other fights announced are Vasyl Lomachenko vs. Jose Pedraza and Terrence Crawford vs. Jose Benavidez. The Lomachenko vs. Pedraza fight on 8 December will be a unification contest with Lomachenko's WBA lightweight title and Pedraza's WBA title on the line. Pedraza boxed well to win the title from Ray Beltran but I can't see him stopping Lomachenko from adding another title to his collection, Crawford vs. Benavidez will be held 13 October in Omaha. Crawford, who has just signed a long term extension to his contract with Top Rank, unified all four major titles at super light and it will lead to some great fights if his aim is to do the same at welterweight. Crawford vs. Errol Spence, Crawford vs. Manny Pacquiao, Crawford vs. Keith Thurman, Crawford vs. Shawn Porter all fights to savour. As with Povetkin we have to hope Benavidez does not turn out to be a banana skin for Crawford. Not likely but in boxing anything can happen. Benavidez is not actually in the WBO

ratings right now. That is because he is No 1 with the WBA and sanctioning bodies tend to omit a fighter if he is in the mandatory spot in another sanctioning body's ratings but the next set of WBO ratings will soon solve that little detail. Both Crawford and the 6'2" Benavidez were top class amateur but their time at the top did not coincide. In 2006 Crawford won a silver medal at the National Golden Gloves and a gold medal at the National Police Athletic League Championships. He turned pro after failing to make the US Team for the 2008 Olympics. In 2009 Benavidez won a gold medal at the National Golden Gloves and a silver medal at the US national Championships. Interestingly in winning a bronze medal at the 2006 US National Championships Crawford beat Mikey Garcia 18-7 but lost to Danny Garcia 20-21. He did beat Danny Garcia in another tournament that year but lost to Cuban Yordenis Ugas which ended his hopes of a place at the 2007 Pan American Games. At the 2006 US National Championships you could have seen Crawford vs. Mikey Garcia and Crawford vs. Danny Garcia in the space of a couple of days for a few dollars entrance fee. Now they would be million dollar fights. In those 2006 Championships you could have watched Rau'shee Warren, Gary Russell, Danny Garcia, Demetrius Andrade and Daniel Jacobs who took gold medals and went on to win world titles and Crawford, Keith Thurman Edwin Rodriguez and Shawn Estrada who won bronze and Mikey Garcia, Casey Ramos, Mason Menard, Sadam Ali, Charles Hatley, Hank Lundy, Brad Solomon, Abraham Han. Jorge Diaz, Jessie Belmontes and Ray Robinson who went home empty handed. All for just a few dollars. A real bargain. After the results at the weekend the situation in the welterweight division became even more interesting but no easier to predict. IBF champion Errol Spence is in a situation where he can make a voluntary defence. The No 1 spot in the IBF ratings was vacant until Yordenis Ugas beat Cesar Barrionuevo on Saturday. Previously Ugas could not go to No 1 as he had not beaten a rated fighter but in the crazy sanctioning body world he can now be No 1 for beating No 11. Shawn Porter, the new WBC champion, has been challenged by Spence but is not taking the bait with Porter's father throwing Keith Thurman, Danny Garcia again, Terrence Crawford and Spence in the mix and saying that they will decide what Porter does next. There has been a suggestion that the WBC might make Ugas Porter's mandatory but how can they jump a guy who was No 9 to No 1 for beating a guy who was No 8 escapes me- oh just a minute that's exactly what the IBF will now do with Ugas!

Notable absentees from the discussions are Crawford's mandatory contender Custio Clayton and also Manny Pacquiao and Amir Khan. In an Instagram post Pacquiao threatened Top Rank with legal action over alleged non-payment of monies due to him from the US rights to his fight with Lucas Matthysse. That situation has been resolved. Pacquiao is seeing his options shrink for with fights very recently completed or scheduled for Porter, Garcia, Thurman, Spence and Crawford they are all "unavailable" right now. Obviously that could work in Khan's favour. Any fight with Pacquiao in it is a big fight for big money and Pacquiao is said to be talking to Eddie Hearn about the possibility of a DAZN show. Since Khan's fight on Saturday was on a Matchroom show it raises the possibility of a Pacquiao vs. Khan fight. However, Khan has said that Pacquiao has ruled himself out by asking for too much money

and Khan will look to fight Kell Brook-which strengthens Brook's hand. The stumbling block to a Khan vs. Brook fight would be the weight with Khan preferring welterweight but Brook knowing he would struggle to make 147lbs. A catchweight compromise might provide a solution but then they have to talk money and that could be another difficult hurdle. A pity both Pacquiao and Khan are past their best but perhaps that is fortunate for Khan.

With Oleg Usyk having signed with Eddie Hearn the drums are beating for Usyk vs. Tony Bellew. Not much drum rolling needed for what will be a big attraction which sells itself. However the WBA are insisting that Usyk faces Denis Lebedev. Whether Usyk does fight Lebedev or not the WBA will still be off a very embarrassing hook that their multi-title greed has speared them. Right now they have a super champion in Usyk, a secondary champion in Beibut Shumenov and an interim champion in Arsen Goulamirian. At the start of this year Lebedev was their super champion. To tidy things up they tucked Lebedev out of sight as "champion in recess". However Lebedev has come out of the little corner they tucked him into and now they have no title for him. It will be interesting to see how they deal with that on their next ratings. They will have to invent a title for Lebedev. How about "super secondary interim no longer in recess champion". Ah what a tangled web we weave.....

There are two possible solutions. Usyk could relinquish the WBA title or they can recant their mandatory order and agree to the Usyk vs. Bellew fight on the understanding that the winner of Usyk vs. Bellew agrees to fight Lebedev. Bellew's last fight was his win over David Haye in a heavyweight bout in May. He has not fought at cruiserweight since beating B J Flores in October 2016. Although right up to and including their 31 July issued ratings the WBA had not rated Bellew at any position in any division he suddenly appeared at No 8 cruiser in their latest ratings. So is that a sign that they are going to approve Usyk vs. Bellew?

Excellent show building for New Orleans on 27 October. Two quarter finals of the WBSS super light series will see Regis Prograis take on Terry Flanagan and Swede Anthony Yigit against Ukrainian Ivan Baranchyk.

I would really have liked to see Donnie Nietes become a four division champion putting him level with Nonito Donaire. I saw the contests last weekend as a close fight but thought he beat Aston Palicte. The 36-year-old Filipino is now 16-0-2 in 18 world title fights and 8-0-1 against former, current and future world champions. His only career loss came on a split decision in 2004 in Indonesian against local fighter Angky Angkotta when Angkotta came in 6lbs over the weight but Nietes still went ahead with the fight. Since then he is 30-0-4 in 34 fights. Hopefully he will get another shot at a version of the super fly title but some sources say that he could face Kazuto Ioka next. A very tough ask.

Good to see British super bantam Thomas Ward may get a chance to fight in a final eliminator for the IBF super bantam title against Cesar Juarez. The 24-0 former undefeated British champion is currently No 8 with the IBF and Juarez No 6. With positions 1 and 2 vacant a win over Juarez could allow Ward to jump to No1. Juarez was stopped in five rounds by Isaac Dogboe for the interim WBO title in January but has scored three wins since then two against decent level opposition.

Still on the super bantams WBO champion Isaac Dogboe has said he would love to fight WBA champion Daniel Roman in London. The young Ghanaian fought in the Junior and Senior Novice championship and won the English National title when campaigning as an amateur in Britain and boxed for Ghana at the 2012 Olympics in London. He was born in Ghana and the Ghanaians naturally reacted with anger to an attempt by a UK paper to try to claim him for England.

Richard Commey is another Ghanaian fighter looking for a title fight but Commey will be in the challenger's role. The IBF had extended the closing date for bids for the mandated title defence for Mikey Garcia against Commey until 13 September but I have not seen the outcome of that yet. The Ghanaian lost a very controversial split decision to Robert Easter for the IBF title in 2016 and deserves a return but Garcia may be looking for a higher profile opponent so it will be interesting to see whether he takes the fight or relinquishes the title.

Going back to the cruisers interim WBA champion Arsen Goulamirian will defend his title against Australian Mark Flanagan in Marseilles on 20 October. This will be the first defence for Goulamirian since winning the title with a victory over Ryad Merhy in March, Flanagan lost on points to Lebedev for the super title in July last year but has registered two wins since then.

Another interesting cruiser fight will see Jai Opetaia (16-0) vs. Bilal Laggoune (23-1-2) in Liege, Belgium on 6 October. Laggoune's IBF Inter-Continental title will be on the line. This figures to be a really tough test for Opetaia. Laggoune lost a split decision to Doudou Ngumbu in February last year but has won his last three fights. Opetaia is No 10 with the WBO and Laggoune No 11 with the IBF.

The fight for the secondary heavyweight title between the holder Manuel Charr and Fres Oquendo is scheduled for 29 September Cologne-don't forget to miss it.

Seriously the machinations of the WBA are not the fault of either boxer and even though neither of them is remotely near world class they could still put on an entertaining fight. Charr has been angered by some of the press focusing on his not having a German passport. Charr is adamant that he feels himself to be German and will go into the ring under both the German and Syrian flags. His citizenship papers have been under review for a very long time with the suggestion that some outstanding tax issues are delaying it.

There is a height vs. weight formula to work out whether a person is obese. With so many heavyweights getting caught in drug testing I wonder if there is a way of coming up with a brain to weight formula to work out whether a fighter is dumb enough to think he can cheat and get away with it?

As a sport we have a bad habit of shooting our self in the foot. As if we did not have enough manufactured titles yet another one has popped up. Last week Umar Salamov won the vacant Eurasian Parliament title. Aghhhhhhhh. To paraphrase the words of Sir Winston "never in the field of human conflict has a sport made itself look so ridiculous".