Written by Frank Lotierzo
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Why is it that I can't handicap heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis when he fights? In over 38 years of being obsessed with boxing, there has never been a fighter who has befuddled me like Lennox Lewis. More times than not I'm on the wrong side when evaluating his fights. When I pick him to win easily, he struggles or loses. When I have picked him to lose, he has fought some of the best fights of his career.

The only thing I can come up with as to why I'm wrong when he fights a majority of the time is because, his chin scares the hell out of me. I always feel that he's one punch away from being stretched for the count of ten. I must confess that one of my major pet-peeves with heavyweight fighters is whether or not they have a good beard. I believe a heavyweight must possess a great chin in order to have a chance at becoming great. The heavyweight division will test the whiskers of a fighter like no other division in boxing. The two major reason's for this are because, heavyweights as a rule are not the best defensive fighters, (excluding Chris Byrd) and they possess the hardest single one punch power.

There is no doubt that Lennox Lewis is a great heavyweight fighter. In my opinion he and Evander Holyfield are the two best heavyweights since the prime of former champ Larry Holmes (1978-1982). Personally, I rate Holyfield a shade above Lewis. Mainly because there can be absolutely no doubt that Holyfield has the better chin. I would even go so far as to say it's a FACT that Holyfield has the better chin than Lewis, and it's not even debatable!

Looking at the overall career accomplishments of Lewis, only one conclusion can be drawn, he's a great fighter. He can punch with both hands, he has a good jab, and he can box. Under the tutelage of Emanuel Stewart, he has learned how to utilize his size and reach, and has become very good at finding and exposing the vulnerabilities of his opponents. Lewis has also demonstrated championship heart and courage, and must be given high praise for his ability to comeback after suffering two devastating one punch knockout defeats at the hands of Oliver McCall and Hasim Rahman.

Therein lies the problem, he's been knocked out twice during his championship reign by two fighters not known for being knockout artists. And let's be honest, he was knocked out by McCall, that wasn't a quick count at all, no way he could've continued. In fact, had he been allowed to continue fighting when he rose, he may have been hurt badly. The shot that Rahman hit him with was a bomb, and it would've knocked out many other top heavyweights, not just Lewis.

However, I just can't get past his chin when I try to handicap his fights. The fact that he's the only outstanding/great heavyweight champion in history to be knocked out for the count by one punch twice during his prime, always scares me when I pick him. I just feel he is vulnerable at anytime to be counted out if his opponent lands cleanly.

My misses on Lennox Lewis

10/31/92 vs. Razor Ruddock: Ruddock was coming off of his two fights with Tyson. In the rematch with Tyson he suffered a broken jaw and still went 12 rounds. Nobody was saying Tyson softened Ruddock up for Lewis prior to the fight, nobody! I thought Ruddock's confidence was soaring at the time and felt he would catch Lewis with his left hand "smash" and sit him on his butt. Instead, Lewis came right out and landed a right hand on Ruddock's chin and Ruddock never recovered, leading to a two round stoppage for Lewis. (I Picked Ruddock by knockout, and he gets knocked out)

09/24/94 vs. Oliver McCall I: I thought Lewis would take McCall apart. I felt he would keep McCall outside with his jab, and give him a boxing lesson. I felt there was a slight chance that Lewis may have scored a stoppage late but, I thought Lewis would most likely win by decision because of McCall's great chin. I never dreamed that McCall was capable of sneaking a short right hand between Lewis' gloves to knock him out. (I picked Lewis to win handily, and he gets stopped)

05/10/96 vs. Ray Mercer: Going into the Mercer fight, I thought that Lewis would give Mercer the boxing lesson he didn't give McCall. In no way did I see Mercer giving Lewis the tough fight that he gave him. Again, I thought Lewis would keep Mercer at the end of his jab and win easy. In my opinion this fight came down to the last round, which I scored for Lewis, justifying the decision. (I Thought Lewis would win easy, and he struggled)

10/04/97 vs. Andrew Golota: Lewis was coming off of fighting Mercer, McCall II, and Akinwande. He had life and death with Mercer. He didn't impress vs. McCall in their rematch, and he was almost dropped by one punch vs. Akinwande. Golota was coming off his two fights with Riddick Bowe, which he completely dominated. Back in 1995 and 1996, I felt Bowe was more formidable than Lewis. Seeing Golota handle Bowe twice, along with seeing Lewis look average at best in his three previous fights led me to think Golota was going to win. I wasn't picking Golota without any reservation but, I did pick him to win. (I picked Golota and Lewis devastates him in one round, this was more a pick against Lewis than a pick on Golota)

03/13/99 vs. Evander Holyfield I: Holyfield was coming off of beating Tyson twice and Michael Moorer convincingly. Lewis was coming off of being almost stopped by Shannon Briggs, and looking less than impressive against Zeljko Mavrovic going into the Holyfield fight. I thought Holyfield would outspeed and out think Lewis on the way to winning a decision. What we saw was Lewis fight a brilliant fight, and Holyfield fight as if he died a week before the fight. This was a horrible decision being called a draw, I scored it 9-3 Lewis. (I pick Holyfield to win comfortably, and he was never in the fight)

11/13/99 vs. Evander Holyfield II: In this fight I expected Lewis to come out and impose his size and strength and win handily. What we saw was Lewis fight tentative against a better prepared Holyfield. In fact, watching this fight I felt Holyfield was the stronger fighter because of the way he pressured Lewis and backed him up throughout the entire fight. In this fight Holyfield shook Lewis on a few occasions, and Lewis didn't hurt Holyfield at anytime during the 12 rounds. I scored this fight 7-5 Lewis. (I picked Lewis to win overwhelmingly, yet he struggled and some felt Lewis lost)

11/11/00 vs. David Tua: Going into the Lewis-Tua fight, I totally bought the rhetoric that Tua spewed. I believed Tua when he said he was going to go to the body and cut off the ring in order to get inside of Lewis' jab and fight inside. I thought that Tua was going to be able to get close and land his big left hook on Lewis and knock him out. What we saw was Lewis box Tua perfectly for 12 rounds winning a lopsided decision. Lewis exposed Tua as being totally limited, and did exactly what he had to in order to win. (I fell in love with Tua's power, and the fact that I didn't have any confidence in Lewis' chin, led me to believe Tua was gonna stop Lewis. Again, this was more a pick against Lewis than a pick on Tua)

04/21/01 vs. Hasim Rahman I: I was ringside the night Oleg Maskaev knocked Rahman out, and out of the ring. Seeing Rahman get stretched by Tua, and almost stopped by Corrie Sanders led me to believe that Lewis could knock out Rahman without stepping foot into the Gym. I was shocked and amazed when Rahman planted that big right on Lennox dropping him as if he was shot. (I pick Lewis to knock out Rahman easily, and he suffers the worst defeat of his career)

11/17/01 vs. Hasim Rahman II: Seeing Lewis getting knocked out by Rahman in their first fight, completely scared me off of Lewis. I felt Lewis' confidence was shattered and Rahman's was sky high. In this fight, Lewis' questionable chin completely swayed me into believing that he would lose this fight and then retire. I just couldn't get the image of the first fight out of my head. (I picked Lewis to be stopped and then retire, and he goes out and scores one of his most impressive knockouts. Again, I picked against Lewis more than I picked Rahman)

06/08/02 vs. Mike Tyson: Ever since the first McCall fight, I felt that Tyson could beat Lewis. After seeing Rahman take Lewis out with one punch, I was convinced Tyson would get some of his reputation back against Lewis. I reasoned that Tyson hits harder than Rahman, he has faster hands than Rahman, and he throws more punches than Rahman. Seeing Lewis being stopped by Rahman made me think Tyson would pulverize him. Once again Lewis proves me wrong. He goes out and gives Tyson the worst beating of his career and leaves no doubt as to who was the better fighter. (I pick Lewis to get stopped, and he fights a great fight and demolishes Tyson. This is getting old but, again this was a pick against Lewis, more than a pick on Tyson.)

Lennox Lewis has had a remarkable career, he has done all that can be asked of any fighter. He has never faced a fighter he wasn't capable of defeating. However, I have never been more wrong when attempting to handicap his bouts. I consistently over-rate him or under-rate going into his fights. In his next bout he fights the once beaten Vitali Klitschko, is there any doubt that I'll be on the wrong side in choosing the winner?

Writers Note

Next week I will write my take on the fight. I will pick who I think will win and why. What ever you do, make sure you get my selection before you make your pick. This way you can take the opposite side!