

Beware Of The Guinn Overreaction

Written by Frank Lotierzo
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Get ready for the "he's a bum" onslaught sure to come the way of Heavyweight Dominick Guinn. Boxing is a sport that although it may not be run and judged like any of the other major sports, it does share the same knee jerk week to week, game to game, and fight to fight over reaction from those who follow it and cover it. I guess there is a tendency on the part of some fans and media to constantly look for new heroes and legends. It makes them jump off and on the bandwagon prematurely.

This past weekend Heavyweight prospect Dominick Guinn suffered the worse thing that can happen to an undefeated fighter on the way up, especially a Heavyweight, he lost. Now that he is no longer undefeated, he is not worthy of some who judge him. After all, he no longer has that glowing perfect unbeaten record behind his name. So how good can he really be? Too bad the networks have conditioned some fans and media members that only the undefeated fighters are worth caring about and watching. What will get lost in all this hysteria is that his opponent Monte Barrett, who is also a professional, fought the best fight of his life and boxed beautiful. It's without a doubt the most complete fight he's ever fought. Another thing that will also kill Guinn is the fact that Joe Mesi, who he is often compared to, beat Barrett and he didn't.

Now we'll hear that Guinn was never that good. He's too small and can't hit. His desire and toughness are not what some thought. On top of that he can't get away from a jab, and he tucks his head too much. Of course none of those things were a thought before the first round against Barrett. That's why they fight. Guinn will most likely become the victim of the same overreaction that applauded him after he beat Michael Grant and Duncan Dokiwari. After those two victories he was built up to be one of the main men in the division. Now he's just as big a question mark as Joe Mesi is thought to be in some factions. I guess the lesson is two fold. Fighters should never believe their press-clippings and look past a perceived opponent who they should beat, and fans and media should judge a fighter from fight to fight instead of declaring him great and unbeatable solely off his last good fight.

That same knee jerk reaction that applies to most other major sports often applies to Boxing, and maybe even more so. I even got caught up a little bit in the Guinn is the future bandwagon hype. And I'm someone who refuses to rank fighters in the overall picture until their best days are behind them like Evander Holyfield, or are retired like Lennox Lewis. For some reason Heavyweight's get tarnished more by a defeat on the way up than the lighter weight fighters do.

Middleweight greats Carlos Monzon and Marvin Hagler suffered decision loses on the way up before they fought for the title. Bernard Hopkins lost his pro debut and Alexis Arguello and Henry Armstrong were KO'd in their's, yet all three went on to become all-time greats. There are plenty of fighters who lost to a good opponent on the way up, but still went on to become all-time greats. Boxing is replete with them.

On the way up Larry Holmes looked like nothing close to a future great on his way to decisioning Tom Prater in the U.S. Championships. Rocky Marciano looked average at best in

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winning two decisions over Ted Lowry in 1949 and 1950 after turning pro in 1947. Lennox Lewis certainly didn't look like anything special in winning a decision over Levi Billups eight months before knocking out Razor Ruddock, in what may have been his most impressive knockout. Cassius Clay was dropped by Sonny Banks and Henry Cooper on the way up, yet many consider him to have one of the greatest chins ever. Joe Frazier was dropped by Oscar Bonavena in their first fight and looked average in beating trial horse George "Scrap Iron" Johnson. Yet Frazier was the first fighter to defeat Ali. I'm not saying Guinn's name will ever be mentioned in the same vein as those greats. Actually I doubt that it will be, but you never know. Maybe Guinn will fall apart after this defeat to Barrett, or maybe it will spur him onto a Hall Of Fame worthy career?

Against Grant and Dokiwari, Guinn looked terrific. In his fight this past weekend versus Barrett, he looked so so. Maybe Grant and Dokiwari matched up better for him than Barrett? He did say he prefers fighting the bigger Heavyweights. Remember how some were all over Mesi after he stopped DaVarryl Williamson in one round. I refused to get caught up in that hype, I knew Mesi wasn't as good as he looked in that fight. Here we are two fights later, and Mesi has been dropped four times by Barrett and Jirov. So I ask, who is the real Mesi? The conquer of Williamson or the one who just escaped defeat versus Barrett and Jirov. No doubt that Barrett and Jirov are better than Williamson, but no other fighter has destroyed Williamson before or since like Mesi.

It's fun to try and predict which fighters will go onto achieve greatness and who is more style and promotion than substance. However, I've found that until a fighter is deep into his career and has either challenged for a title or won one, it's pretty much fight to fight in his evaluation and progress. Mesi was thought to be the real deal by some after Williamson, and now there is a perception that he's all hype and promotion after Barrett and Jirov.

Now we have Guinn who was riding high going into the Monte Barrett fight. No doubt that his stock is still dropping at this moment since his defeat. Obviously the book on Guinn is no where close to being complete. I'm going to wait until I see him a few more times before declaring him a stiff with no future, or the best American Heavyweight since Riddick Bowe as Larry Merchant once thought. I believe now that Guinn has been defeated, we'll really find out how good he is or isn't. I'm not saying Guinn is the barometer for someone who can recover and make a significant impact on the sport. I just need to see him in a few more times with some quality opponents before I judge him as being the next ??