

## A Feeling On Andrew Golota

Written by Frank Lotierzo

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One of my biggest frustrations in life is being right when I wanted to be wrong. What makes this a double whammy for me is this usually unfolds letter perfect when the thing I feel will happen is something I don't want to. I have that feeling about one of my least favorite fighters, Andrew Golota. I can forgive almost anything once, but Golota has flat-out quit in more than a few of his biggest fights while being paid millions of dollars. Every time I see some four round fighter get up again and again for a couple hundred dollars, I think of him quitting.

Golota's last misdeed came in October 2000 in his fight with Mike Tyson—a fight he quit in between the second and third round. The fight ended with Golota fighting with his trainer Al Certo, telling Certo that he was not going out for the third round. Just as I asked then, when is the last time anyone saw a fighter at any level tell their corner he's not fighting anymore? I often wonder what went through the mind of warriors like Saad, Holyfield, Frazier, and Gatti when they witnessed Golota submit?

Golota retired from boxing after the Tyson fight in October, 2000. In August of 2003 he returned to the ring and stopped Brian Nix. Two months later he stopped Terrence Lewis. In February of this year Golota signed a promotional contract with Don King. Two short months after signing with King, Golota fought IBF heavyweight champion Chris Byrd, who is also promoted by King. Golota said before the fight that his past was behind him and he knew this was his last chance to right his career. Golota showed up for the fight with Byrd in great shape, and never looked more cut. Against possibly the trickiest fighter in the division stylistically, Golota fought well and never came close to losing his composure. The fight was extremely close and was declared a draw when the judges' scores were tabulated.

Based on his good showing against Byrd, Golota has been given another title shot. On November 13th Golota will fight WBA heavyweight champ John Ruiz. This is a great opportunity for Golota, because on paper he matches up well with Ruiz style-wise, assuming he doesn't implode mentally. Golota has size, strength, and the ability to put two and three punch combinations together to compliment his better than average boxing skills.

Ruiz is a tough mauler who is physically stronger than he looks or is given credit for. He's not a big puncher and usually doesn't land many clean shots on his opponents. One of the problems for Ruiz in this fight is that he's right there to be hit and often leads with his face. Which means Golota, who is pretty accurate with his punches, will not have much trouble tagging him.

I see Ruiz vulnerable to fighters who can punch, as we saw in his fight with David Tua. The fact that he's not hard to hit leaves him a sitting duck for a good puncher. The other style Ruiz is vulnerable to is a good boxer with speed, as was the case in his fight with Roy Jones. Obviously Golota doesn't punch like Tua, and isn't as fast or the boxer that Jones is. But he combines them better than any fighter Ruiz has faced recently.

Heading into his last fight with Chris Byrd, I had a very strong feeling Golota would bring his

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A-game and begin the resurrection of his career. And that's exactly what he did. Against Byrd, I figured he would hold up emotionally. Since Byrd wasn't a puncher, Golota wasn't concerned about getting knocked out or embarrassed. And the fact that he was three inches taller and thirty pounds heavier than Byrd helped him psychologically.

Right now the heavyweight division is starving for something to get excited about. And I don't think the November 13 Heavyweight card in New York lessens the hunger. Lewis-Klitschko was the last heavyweight fight that really stimulated boxing fans. And that was in June of 2003.

Presently, Vitali Klitschko is viewed by most fight observers as the most formidable heavyweight in the world. What other heavyweight brings enough to the table to get excited about seeing him confront Klitschko? If you inflate the case for one or two of them, maybe you could hype the fight. However, I'd bet a focused Andrew Golota would generate some excitement?

I'm not a believer in the so-called bigger heavyweights of today. But in Klitschko's case, it may be a lot of why he's the top fighter in the division. He has the toughness and just enough skill to beat the other real big heavyweights, and he is too big and strong for the others. That's why Golota is part of the perfect storm that may be coming together in boxing's flagship division. Golota has the size, power, and boxing skill to present Vitali with a challenge. That is provided he doesn't show up on fight night already defeated. Something that can't be ruled out as a possibility based on his past. The pressure of a big fight is something he hasn't been able to cope with.

My feeling is Golota is more serious and determined than he's ever been in his career. He is well aware of what the stakes are and that this is his best and last shot to win a piece of the title. John Ruiz is a tough fighter and has been an overachiever in the heavyweight division. However, I think it's Golota's time and think he'll be a title holder soon. Again, just a gut feeling and I wouldn't be upset if I end up being wrong.

In boxing, things have a way of working out so the best fights can be made. Klitschko-Toney would be compelling, but the way Toney's body is breaking down, nothing is written in stone with him. Nobody wants to see Klitschko-Ruiz or Klitschko-Byrd. It's hard to make a case favoring either Ruiz or Byrd over Klitschko. On the other hand, Golota has the size and skill to make it interesting against Klitschko.

I see Klitschko-Golota as a major attraction in today's pedestrian heavyweight division. I have a feeling after Ruiz-Golota and Klitschko-Williams, the talk of Drago vs. Drago will begin. And that has Klitschko-Golota written all over it.