

Danny Williams: Evaluating Him After Tyson

Written by Frank Lotierzo
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It's been just about a month since British heavyweight Danny Williams scored one of boxing's major upsets of the year when he knocked out Mike Tyson in the fourth round. Since leaving Tyson resting on the bottom rope at the conclusion of the fight, Williams has been rumored to be fighting everybody from Floyd Patterson to Vitali Klitschko. As of this writing it's been reported that Williams is going to fight the WBC's 14th ranked contender, Oleg Maskaev for the WBU Heavyweight title on October 9th.

Over the last month Williams has said that he wants to be known as the legend killer.

"This is where I should've been for a long time. It's only because I didn't do things right and didn't perform that it has taken such a long time."

I say good for Danny Williams, he's earned the bragging rights for now. I just hope he doesn't become Buster Douglas and forget the dedication and discipline it took to get him where he's at now. And let's not forget, he still doesn't have a piece of the title yet. What if Williams gets taken apart in his next fight? His upset of Tyson will then be dismissed by many as a fluke. They will point to the fact that Tyson is 38 and that he injured his leg in the fight as the real reasons Williams won.

Today, so many analysts and fans base too much off of one fight or one game. That's not taking anything away from Williams, but he still has some more to prove against the world's upper tier heavyweights. As good as he looked and fought against Tyson, it's still only one fight. I remember how great Buster Douglas all of the sudden became after he knocked out Tyson. After Tyson, everyone started talking about his size and reach along with his boxing ability. Yet nobody said anything about those skills before he fought Tyson. Even in the years before he fought Tyson, he was known for having some skill and ability, but nobody thought he was anything special, nobody. And if anyone now says they ever predicted that Buster Douglas would hold a piece of the heavyweight title one day, they're lying.

Buster Douglas was a nice fighter, but he was stopped in three of his four losses before fighting Tyson. In his first title shot versus Tony Tucker, he packed it in after the 10th round. In his seventh pro bout, he was stopped by David Bey, who was making his pro debut. Yet heading into his title defense against Evander Holyfield, many picked him to win. This was purely based off of him beating Tyson and nothing else. I wonder how many would've picked Douglas to beat Holyfield if Douglas fought him right before he fought Tyson? How about nobody!

It turned out that Douglas fought the fight of his life against Tyson, and Tyson no doubt looked past him. Another thing many observers overlooked was one of Douglas' most effective weapons against Tyson, his right uppercut, would be a non factor against Holyfield. Tyson was a sitting duck for Douglas' uppercut because he's short and comes in low. He was right there for it. Obviously Holyfield being taller and more straight up wouldn't be right there for it like Tyson. As fate would have it, Douglas tried landing one of those big right uppercuts on Holyfield in the

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third round of their fight. Holyfield, knowing it was coming, only had to lean back slightly from the short punch, and then countered with perfect straight right hand on Douglas' chin, sending his head the opposite direction from his legs. Douglas was counted out, giving Holyfield the undisputed title, and highlighting how Buster Douglas hadn't defeated one top fighter before or after Tyson. Be careful evaluating any fighter off of one fight.

The same thing happened in 1978, only to a lesser degree when Leon Spinks took the undisputed heavyweight title from a 36 year old Muhammad Ali. Spinks had only seven pro fights when he fought an old and tired Ali, who was out of shape and unmotivated. Spinks out worked Ali over 15 rounds and won the fight to capture the undisputed title. Again, after the fight some so called experts, not all of them, but a lot of them, were now touting Spinks as the fighter to beat in the division. Purely based off of Spinks beating a shot Ali, forgetting that prior to fighting Ali, Spinks was held to a draw by Scott LeDoux. Instead of realizing that Ali probably would have lost to any other top heavyweight in the world that night, some started to consider that maybe Spinks was really one of the top heavyweights in the world. When in reality it was just that Spinks was the one who was there that night to take advantage of Ali's declining skills and physical condition.

In the rematch six months later, Ali showed up in the best shape he could be in for a man three months shy of 37. This time Ali just moved and tied Spinks up, not allowing him to get anything going offensively. Even to this day, many overlook the fact that Ali actually beat up and hit Spinks harder in their first fight than he did in the rematch. Ali was a more eroded fighter in the rematch, it's just that he was in better shape and kept Spinks from raising any hell. Spinks gave the title back to Ali, losing a 15 round unanimous decision.

Nine months after losing the title back to Ali, Spinks fought South African Heavyweight Gerrie Coetzee. Coetzee stopped Spinks in the first round. In his last fight prior to fighting Spinks, Coetzee was taken the 10 round limit by Ibar Arrington. After stopping Spinks, Coetzee fought John Tate for the vacant WBA title and lost a 15 round decision. Within a one year period, Coetzee was taken the distance by Arrington and Tate, yet he stopped Spinks in one round.

So be careful when evaluating any fighter off of one fight. Personally, I can't wait to see Williams in his next bout, but I'm not quite sure what to expect. There are, though, two things I'm confident of. One is that he will not look as good as he did versus Tyson. And two, he'll look better than he did in last couple fights before he fought Tyson. Maybe I should add a third. That is I will never evaluate any fighter off of one fight, regardless of how bad or good they look.

Remember, nobody would've picked Douglas to beat Holyfield had they fought prior to Douglas knocking out Tyson. Yet, based off of that one showing against Tyson, many considered him the favorite to beat Holyfield. Wonder how many will make the same mistake evaluating Danny Williams?