

## Kelly Pavlik Keeps Producing

Written by Joey Knish  
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Saturday night at the Honda Center in Anaheim, California, it was expected that Jorge “El Travieso” Arce would show fight fans why he is considered one of the most exciting fighters in boxing. Instead, it was middleweight contender Kelly Pavlik who did just that.

Standing close to 6’3” and firing whistling right hands down the middle after searing left hooks, the “Ghost” Pavlik gave Jose Luis Zertuche a crash course in the sweet science, and Zertuche crashed hard.

While Zertuche was strong and dangerous early, Pavlik’s punches were fired with such accuracy and precision that the eventual breakdown of his opponent was set in motion in the very first round. Proving that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, Pavlik landed first with his piercing jab and drove right hands down the middle that ricocheted off his opponents’ face. When the Youngstown, Ohio, fighter cracked the whip on his left hook, it found its mark and staggered Zertuche with regularity. Zertuche appeared very strong and muscled but Pavlik’s punches continued to detonate on impact and it wasn’t long before the 29-year-old Mexican was stumbling through potholes.

It was a most impressive performance by the 24-year-old Pavlik as he demonstrated excellent technical skills, did a great job at creating and maintaining distance, and awed fans with his natural power. After the first few rounds it became a matter of “when,” not “if,, Zertuche would crumble under the vicious assault from his elongated foe.

The brutal end came in the eighth round as Zertuche, who falls to 19-4-2 with 14 KOs, continued to catch everything the seemingly tireless Pavlik threw at him. Repetitive crunching right hands finally separated Zertuche from his senses as the durable fighter’s body stopped functioning well before he had a chance to give in. It was a stoppage that can only be described as “brutal.” Zertuche’s hands and head dropped dead as if his electricity had been cut short due to another stunning right cross. The follow up left hook/uppercut was unnecessary but landed flush as referee Raul Caiz jumped in and tackled Zertuche down to safety.

And so came the end to an incredibly exciting fight and the next chapter of something that just may be special, the career of Kelly Pavlik.

Somewhere in the mix that makes the best middleweight fighters are Jermain Taylor, Arthur Abraham, Edison Miranda and Ronald “Winky” Wright, with Pavlik, Sam Soliman and Felix Sturm lurking. I know Sergio Mora likes to make like he belongs in this group, and maybe he does, but he still has an “unproven” stamp that has yet to be changed to “approved.”

With Pavlik rated in the top three by both the WBC and WBA it won’t be long before we find out exactly where he stands and how good he may be. Certainly Zertuche was a very big, strong, hard-hitting opponent who answered questions many had about Pavlik’s chin, but he did have his limitations in terms of being a slower opponent who would be easy to find. Still, he was

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stopped for the first time in his career, just as was Bronco McKart when Pavlik battered him for six rounds last year. True, McKart was a junior middleweight for most of his career, but Pavlik has merely done everything asked of him in the ring.

As is the way in boxing, prospects are brought along with care, especially one as young as Pavlik. His past four opponents—Fulgencio Zuniga, Bronco McKart, Lenord Pierre, Jose Luis Zertuche—represent a step up in class, and he has passed with flying colors.

The only way to find out how good Kelly Pavlik is is to put him in with the best, and regardless of the end result, we know it will be exciting.