

## Kelly "The Ghost" Pavlik: Fighter Of The Year

Written by David A. Avila

Monday, 17 December 2007 19:00

---

The decision to pick the Fighter of the Year for 2007 was not easy with so many fighters enjoying good years, but Kelly "The Ghost" Pavlik had a great year and he's the clear-cut choice.

"Kelly Pavlik had a great year," said Cameron Dunkin who manages Pavlik. "No doubt about it."

Attaining recognition as Fighter of the Year means surpassing thousands of other prizefighters that put on the gloves and risk their lives in hand-to-hand combat. It was a somewhat difficult decision but when all is considered Pavlik deserves the title.

### Why Pavlik?

Simply because he was not supposed to win two of three fights but buzzed through a murderer's row with a single-mindedness and a monster of a right hand.

Now Pavlik reigns supreme as the middleweight champion and the best fighter of 2007.

Last January Pavlik first gave a national audience a display of his frightening power against Mexico's Jose Luis Zertuche. Though very few knew it, the Mexican slugger was a spoiler who some felt could deal the Ohioan his first defeat. But not that night. A Pavlik assault left Zertuche laying against the ropes knocked out on his feet.

Then came Colombia's Edison Miranda a scary, cocky middleweight who beat the bejeebers out of WBO middleweight titleholder Arthur Abraham but was tagged with a loss. The odds-makers didn't think Pavlik could withstand the heavy punches of Miranda.

### Surprise!

Pavlik pummeled Miranda and basically made him submit in the ring with punches that seemed to make sonic booms off the Colombian's head.

When Pavlik finally signed to fight undefeated pound for pound middleweight champion Jermain Taylor, he still wasn't given full respect. Most of the east coast boxing fraternity tabbed the Arkansas middleweight to win the fight while the west coast, based on their experience watching Pavlik fight in-person, picked the Youngstown bludgeoner to cap the year with his biggest victory.

At first it didn't look good as Taylor jumped on Pavlik and dropped him with a flurry of punches, but as in his fight against Fulgencio Zuniga a few years earlier, he rose and mounted a counter-attack the resulted in Taylor sinking to the canvas after Pavlik's relentless assault.

No doubt about it, Pavlik is the Fighter of the Year for 2007.

## Kelly "The Ghost" Pavlik: Fighter Of The Year

Written by David A. Avila

Monday, 17 December 2007 19:00

---

### Honorable mentions

Others deserve honorable mention including IBF flyweight titleholder Nonito Donaire who was a big underdog against Australia's undefeated tyrant of the flyweight division Vic Darchinyan last July. The picture of Donaire's one-punch knockout with a left hook was one of the top knockout blows of the year. He also beat Luis Maldonado and Kevin Hudgins with impressive knockouts but was favored in those two matches.

WBO featherweight titleholder Steve Luevano was told he must travel to England to meet hometown hero Nicky Cook. He willingly accepted and proceeded to dominate with five knockdowns in beating the British fighter and handing him first defeat. Then he returned to the states to face hard-hitting veteran Antonio Davis in Las Vegas. He dominated in that fight too. The featherweight champion rarely gets attention but he had a tremendous year.

Who could overlook Miguel Cotto's victories in 2007? His masterful battle against Pomona's Sugar Shane Mosley last month and his wins over Zab Judah and Oktay Urkal were notable achievements, but he was supposed to win all those fights according to the odds-makers.

"I think you should name both Cotto and Pavlik co-Fighters of the Year," suggested Top Rank's Bob Arum, whose company handles both fighters.

Manny Pacquiao had two wins in 2007 but it was difficult to find an expert that felt Mexican fighters Marco Antonio Barrera and Jorge Solis had a chance to beat Pacman. The Filipino fighter rolled with easy victories and has a slightly tougher assignment next March against Juan Manuel Marquez.

Joe Calzaghe of Wales won his two fights convincingly over Denmark's Mikkel Kessler and America's Peter Manfredo but he was the favorite. Next year he has a tough test when he matches skills against a fellow pound for pound fighter Bernard Hopkins.

Lightweight champion Juan "Baby Bull" Diaz is another fighter who could easily be mentioned as the Fighter of the Year, but his wins over Julio Diaz and Acelino Freitas were expected. Next year could be even better if he fights Pacquiao or Joel Casamayor.

Floyd Mayweather's victories over Oscar De La Hoya and Ricky Hatton deserve mention, but he was the favorite going into both fights. His knockout of Hatton was a surprise.

Others having a good year were Bernard Hopkins, Ivan Calderon, Paul Williams and Celestino Caballero. But Pavlik's three wins were the most remarkable and climactic.

"When I first saw this kid I knew he was something special," said Dunkin. "I thought he was going to be a super star."

Arum, who has promoted De La Hoya and Mayweather, agrees with Dunkin.

"He has the potential to be as great as Oscar De La Hoya," said Arum.

## **Kelly “The Ghost” Pavlik: Fighter Of The Year**

Written by David A. Avila

Monday, 17 December 2007 19:00

---

Pavlik will not rest in 2008. He meets Taylor in a non-title rematch on Feb. 16, in Las Vegas. The contest will be at the agreed upon 168-pound level.

“A lot of people didn’t believe me about Kelly Pavlik, maybe they’ll start believing now,” said Dunkin.

### **Fight of the Year: Israel Vazquez vs. Rafael Marquez II**

It was difficult picking the Fight of the Year because essentially both Mexico City fighters Israel Vazquez and Rafael Marquez met in two clashes that were riveting displays of high-caliber but explosive professional boxing.

The first clash took place in Los Angeles in March where Marquez survived a knockdown in the third round and broke something in Vazquez’s nose with a riveting uppercut. Unable to breathe Vazquez called it off in the seventh round to the amazement of many who felt he should continue.

In the rematch Vazquez and Marquez did little probing and both engaged in a firefight even more exciting than the first. It was professional prizefighting at its best and Vazquez emerged with a knockout victory in the sixth round.

“You seldom see a fight as exciting,” said Larry Merchant, HBO’s analyst.

### **Knockout of the Year**

Nonito Donaire’s fifth round knockout of undefeated slugger Vic Darchinyan was startling and emphatic. A single left hook counter by the Filipino fighter dropped the champion to dreamland. When he awoke, he thought the fight was still on not knowing he had been unconscious. July 7, 2007 was a very good day for Donaire who is now considered one of the most dangerous fighters in the world.

### **Round of the Year**

Round four between Miguel Cotto and Sugar Shane Mosley was about as close as it gets to a perfect war. The two welterweights put on a show before a sold out Madison Square Garden and left people gasping at their willingness to exchange with Mosley’s right equal to Cotto’s left.

### **Contender of the Year**

Oxnard’s Victor Ortiz will grab the torch from retired Fernando Vargas and comes with some heavy-duty firepower. He’s expected to win a junior welterweight title in 2008 after demolishing four consecutive opponents with his southpaw power. Ortiz blasted out former world champion Carlos Maussa in one round. It took Ricky Hatton nine rounds to do the same.

### **Manager of the Year**

## **Kelly “The Ghost” Pavlik: Fighter Of The Year**

Written by David A. Avila

Monday, 17 December 2007 19:00

---

Cameron Dunkin has to be the Manager of the Year with Kelly Pavlik, Nonito Donaire, Steve Luevano, Victor Ortiz and Zahir Raheem in his stable of boxers. Pavlik, Donaire and Luevano all upset world champions to grab the titles this year.

“It’s been a very good year,” said Dunkin.