

TSS Prediction Page-Pavlik Or Taylor?

Written by Robert Mladinich
Tuesday, 12 February 2008 19:00

Although there is no title up for grabs in the Saturday rematch between Kelly “The Ghost” Pavlik and Jermain “Bad Intentions” Taylor, there is still a lot on the line for both fighters. The last time they met, in Atlantic City on September 29, Pavlik survived a brutal second round knockdown to come back and stop the favored Taylor in the seventh round.

In doing so, he won the undisputed middleweight championship. Should Pavlik, 32-0 (29 KOs), Youngstown, Ohio, beat Taylor, 27-1-1 (17 KOs), Little Rock, Arkansas, in the rematch, he will be on the cusp of superstardom. Pavlik is currently a 2-1 favorite to beat Taylor for the second time.

Pavlik has already garnered, among other things, a feature story in Sports Illustrated. For that magazine to dedicate so much space to a fighter means the fighter has arrived.

Although the last bout was fought at 160 pounds, this non-title affair will be contested at 166 pounds. Who or how that will benefit either fighter is the subject of much conjecture. One thing that nearly everyone agrees on is that there will once again be a knockout.

Here is an objective sampling of what 21 boxing insiders had to say about this eagerly anticipated matchup, which will be held at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas and televised on HBO Pay-Per-View:

Tim Smith, New York Daily News: “What Pavlik does, he does very well. He throws a good one-two punch, but Taylor is the better all-around fighter. He can do a lot more things than Pavlik. The only reason Taylor didn’t stop Pavlik the last time was because he was out of shape. The shock of losing should force him to get into good shape this time, and he should stop Pavlik around the fourth round.” Taylor by stoppage.

David Diaz, WBC lightweight champion: “I think Kelly has Jermain’s number. He (Pavlik) got a little careless in the first fight. He tried to show he could take a punch and got caught. He won’t make a mistake like that again. Unless Jermain comes with a completely different style, which I don’t think he can do, Kelly should stop him between the eighth and tenth rounds.” Pavlik by stoppage.

Nick Charles, ShoBox: The New Generation commentator: “If Jermain can get past nine rounds, he should win a decision. But that is a big if. Jermain has already out-boxed a great boxer in Bernard Hopkins. On paper out-boxing Kelly should be easier, but styles make fights and Kelly has so much power and confidence. I’m going to go out on a limb and go with an upset.” Taylor by decision.

Steve Farhood, ShoBox: The New Generation commentator: “Given what happened in the first fight, it is very difficult to pick Taylor in the rematch. I expect it to be another great action fight with the likely outcome being Pavlik by TKO in the middle rounds.” Pavlik by stoppage.

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Bernard Fernandez, Philadelphia Daily News: “History tells me that when an undefeated fighter loses his first bout the way that Taylor did, the best course of action is to take a tune-up or two before engaging in a rematch. There also seems to be a lot of turmoil in Taylor’s camp, which makes me think he might not be ready for the rematch just yet. I’m picking Pavlik to win by 10th round TKO.” Pavlik by stoppage.

Willie Savannah, manager/trainer of lightweight champion Juan Diaz: “I keep changing my mind on who will win or how they will win. Pavlik won the first one, but you can’t forget that Jermain almost won the first one. I don’t know who the weight increase will favor, if it favors anyone at all. In a fight where everything points to a knockout, I’m going to pick Jermain to win a decision.” Taylor by decision.

Gerry Cooney, former heavyweight title challenger: “The second fight should be a way better fight than the first one, and the first one was a great one. Pavlik banged Taylor up pretty good, and when you win a title you usually improve by about 10 to 15 percent. Pavlik will probably out-slug Taylor again and stop him in seven or eight rounds.” Pavlik by stoppage.

Iran Barkley, former multi-division champion: “If Taylor does what he’s supposed to do and takes care of business, he should knock Pavlik out and get his title back. He had Pavlik almost out last time, but he was not prepared mentally or physically to finish him off. The loss should bring Taylor back to earth. He knows he has to win this one, so he will do what it takes to make that happen and probably stop Pavlik in the later rounds.” Taylor by stoppage.

Sean Sullivan, editor of Boxing Digest magazine: “It’s a close fight to call, but given all of the factors I am leaning toward Pavlik by stoppage in the middle rounds. He seems to have everything in his favor. He took Taylor’s best punch and came back to win the first fight. Plus, I think the extra weight will help him more than it will help Taylor. Pavlik has shown no fear of any of his opponents, and he won’t be afraid of Taylor.” Pavlik by stoppage.

John Scully, trainer and former light heavyweight title challenger: “Taylor proved that he could hurt Pavlik in the first fight, but he didn’t prove that he could finish him. Pavlik proved that he could knock Taylor out, which is much more important than just hurting an opponent. Pavlik isn’t the type of guy to rest on his laurels and slack off. I think he’ll come back even stronger and more determined and score a late round knockout.” Pavlik by stoppage.

Bruce Silverglade, owner of Gleason’s Gym in Brooklyn, New York: “Taylor should be a lot hungrier than he was in the first fight, so he will come back and stop Pavlik by the seventh round. With better mental and physical conditioning, Taylor will bring more to this fight than Pavlik.” Taylor by stoppage.

David Selwyn: manager of female boxers Eileen Olszewski, Ronica Jeffrey and Cristy Nickle: “This fight will go longer than the first one, but Pavlik will stop him again. He will be even more confident and strong with the extra weight because he won’t have to dry out. I hear that he is already on or near weight, which is a very good sign of his conditioning and confidence. Pavlik has nothing to lose and everything to gain in this fight, while everything is on the line for Taylor.” Pavlik by stoppage.

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James Moore, unbeaten Irish junior middleweight who is headlining the “Gaelic Storm” show at Madison Square Garden on March 15: “I think Taylor just might pull it off this time around. I don’t think he was in the best of condition last time, and I believe the extra six pounds will help him more than it will help Pavlik. It will be a good, tough fight, but I believe Taylor will probably stop Pavlik.” Taylor by stoppage.

Oisín Fagan: lightweight contender who is fighting on the Gaelic Storm show: “Taylor did very well against Pavlik when he was busy, but he couldn’t close the show. Pavlik is much too strong and much too confident for Taylor, especially after stopping him the first time. Pavlik will catch him with another right hand, and it will be lights out all over again within five rounds.” Pavlik by stoppage.

Mike O’Sullivan: co-owner of Celtic Gloves Promotions, which is promoting the Gaelic Storm show: “I don’t want to take anything away from what The Ghost (Pavlik) accomplished back in September, but Bad Intentions (Taylor) will redeem himself this time, with or without a belt on the line.” Taylor by stoppage.

David Wolf, former manager of world champions Ray “Boom Boom” Mancini, Donny Lalonde and Lonnie Bradley: “I have seen a marked decrease in Taylor since he let (original pro trainer) Pat Burns go. I think he actually regressed under Emanuel Steward, who is a terrific trainer but just didn’t have any chemistry with Taylor. Ozell Nelson (Taylor’s amateur trainer) has no real professional pedigree, so I think it was a mistake to go back with him. Taylor will do well early, but I expect Pavlik to come from behind and stop him around the eighth round.” Pavlik by stoppage.

Mike Silver, noted boxing historian: “Everyone is asking why Taylor took this fight so soon after being knocked out in devastating fashion. I think it is more unwise for Pavlik to take an immediate rematch. Going into the first fight, Taylor was considered the favorite and almost beat him. Taylor was totally surprised by Pavlik’s ability to take his best punch. Pavlik cannot change his style, while Taylor, who is a much better all-around fighter, can change his. While I never discount a puncher like Pavlik, I pick Taylor to stop him by the middle rounds.” Taylor by stoppage.

Eddie Mustafa Muhammad, former light heavyweight champion: “These guys fighting at the higher weight will bring out the best in both of them because they won’t have to starve themselves. This will be a similar fight to the first one, but overall a much better fight. The only who really wants it the most will win, probably by stoppage. That said, I can’t pick a winner. It’s too close to call.” No pick.

Hector Roca, trainer of, among others, Maureen Shea, “The Real Million Dollar Baby”: “Styles make fights and Taylor will go back to his old style and train with his old people. Against Pavlik the first time, he tried to change too much (under new trainer Emanuel Steward) and it failed. He will go back to doing what he does best, and score a knockout within five rounds.” Taylor by stoppage.

Teddy B. Blackburn, photographer: “Pride is more important to J.T. than any amount of

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money or belts. Pride will enable him to score a knockout in the eighth round." Taylor by stoppage.

Bob Mladinich, TSS writer: As sky-high as Pavlik's confidence must be, it seems to me that Taylor can be a lot better this time out. This fight should be a slugfest that could go either way for as long as it lasts, but I have a feeling that Taylor will prevail by scoring a mid-round stoppage. Taylor by stoppage.

Totals: 21

Pavlik: 9

Taylor: 11

No pick: 1

Pavlik by stoppage: 9

Taylor by stoppage: 9

Pavlik by decision: 0

Taylor by decision: 2

Team TSS looks in to the future, and offers their takes on how Pavlik/Taylor II goes down.

See who thinks JT will go down, again. See who thinks Taylor roars back, fit and fiery. Then, TSS Universe, tack on your own pred. That means you Radam, Rudy, Salt, Don etc. And Don--no cursing!

RALPH GONZALEZ

I don't think Pavlik-Taylor II will be much different than their first encounter. It will be a war again with Taylor having his moments but the Youngstown native will prove too big and too strong. I see Pavlik taking this one in the later rounds by TKO after a bit of a struggle.

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RONAN KEENAN

Jermain Taylor's apparent refusal to admit his technical flaws doesn't inspire confidence, and the higher weight limit shouldn't do him any favors either. But his natural ability can't be underestimated. He will probably look to use his speed to outbox Pavlik, but the champion's size and iron resolve should be the decisive factor.

RAYMOND "The Marksman" MARKARIAN

If boxing had a viewers choice awards, Pavlik/Taylor 2 would be right at the top. Call me crazy but I am interested to see what would happen if these 2 bulls rammed heads for 12 full rounds. Taylor stressed his conditioning during training and he might hesitate to let fly early in the fight. Make no mistake both men have power and can finish when necessary. On Saturday, there could be a chess match of sorts. That is until someone gets smacked in the face. And to be honest, I don't think Taylor lost confidence after the 1st fight. Pavlik was hitting Taylor with one-tuos at will in the first fight. Therefore Oznell Nelson must have stressed some new kind of defensive strategy for the rematch. If Taylor stays disciplined and tones down the head-hunting he could throw Pavlik off early with a counterpunching attack. But Kelly comes to fight and the pressure will be on. Pavlik probably has the strongest neck I have ever seen for a middleweight. The guy was getting rocked silly in round 2 of the first fight, but his neck did not move until he stuck his chin out. There will be some feeling out early by both fighters and the outcome is a toss up. But the show will continue from where it ended in September. Taylor wins this one by TKO in the 9th. But don't be surprised if it goes the distance.

TIM STARKS

Everything most everyone says that's sour about Jermain Taylor is true -- he's regressed, he's an "instinct fighter," he spends too much time fighting going back, he has lapses in concentration, you name it. He's made what can only be viewed as a terrible strategic mistake in employing Ozell Nelson as his trainer, when he should have returned to Pat Burns. His claim that he wasn't in shape for Kelly Pavlik the first time around is astounding; if not that fight, what would it take to get Taylor to perform up to expectations? It could be that this is it. It could be that he is going to be better at 166 lbs., since he'd outgrown 160. It could be, as he says, that he needed a "butt-kicking" to focus on his career. I doubt all of it. Taylor, as Ron Borges said here, is what he is. The only thing I don't doubt about Taylor is his bravery. Pavlik offers less up for the doubting -- the only risk is that he's gotten soft by becoming an Ohio state hero, and that by talking openly about his successful double-jab strategy last go-round, he's telegraphed too much. Pavlik said if Taylor comes out slugging, he'll get knocked out quickly. Taylor might win by early knockout, if he's brave enough. Taylor might win a decision, if he doesn't let his bravery get the best of him and boxes smartly. Pavlik, though, is just too good, and my bet is that Taylor, for all his talk, is still wallowing in a lack of self-confidence. I see a knockout happening again, probably around the 7th, same as last time. The very tall Pavlik will almost certainly be more powerful at 166, so I wouldn't be surprised if it's sooner.

MICHAEL WOODS

Man, I'm a wimp. I don't want to choose. JT is not as bad as some have been saying. Usually, the dude wins, sometimes not looking great in the process. Last time out, he got whomped. It's

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hard to shrug that off, even if you come up with mitigating circumstances. Maybe JT is over the rubout, but maybe he has a brown acid flashback, and tightens up, and gets whomped again. But Pavlik has his own cross to bear...The city of Youngstown's hopes and dreams and identity is on the shoulders of that kid. That's a heavy burden to carry. He may well be mentally tired coming in to this rematch. I see a draw--one judge picks KP, one judge picks JT, and one judge, a wimp like me, sees it even.

PHIL WOOLEVER

By the handicapping logic I employ, Pavlik looks like he should be at least a 2-1 favorite based on their first fight, and his impressive KO streak against well proven opponents like Jose Luis Zertuche, Bronco McCart, Fulgencio Zuniga and an imposing Edison Miranda. How Taylor looked against Ouma and Spinks seems more indicative now than Taylor's rumbles with Hopkins and Wright.

I was definitely wrong picking Taylor over Pavlik the first time and was foolishly thinking "I knew it" during the 2nd round before Pavlik made me a believer. But I'm sticking with Taylor, because although he hasn't shown it since what I consider his peak against Daniel Edouard, I think Taylor is stubborn, strong, and well trained enough to force a terrific trilogy.

MIKE LYNCH

Last time, I predicted Kelly Pavlik by 9th round KO. In the 1st go-around, Bad Intentions showed us all that he can put Pavlik down early. Thing is, Pavlik stood right back up, hung on and then took the fight right back to JT from the start of Round 3. This time, I like Pavlik once again. 29 of the man's 32 victories have been by kayo. I'll take Pavlik by 10th round KO. Perhaps Taylor will be in better condition with the added weight. Perhaps Ozell Nelson will revitalize him. But my money is on The Ghost to revisit the past.

JOHN NGUYEN

Taylor can hurt Pavlik, which he obviously proved the first time around. The psychological damage done from losing could be negated by the confidence that he can dust Pavlik at any time. Taylor will definitely be dangerous throughout. The problem is, from about the fourth round on in the first meeting, Pavlik was in no real danger. He figured out that if he could stem JT's assertiveness by keeping the fight at range, Taylor was a tamed tiger. I think Kelly is going to play it safe, feep the fight at a distance and a manageable pace, and hope that Jermain doesn't land anything big. It'll be scary every second of the way for Pavlik and his people, I think he pulls it off, and eventually ends it big.