

"Bad" Chad Don't Be Had

Written by Frank Lotierzo
Sunday, 10 May 2009 19:00

Here's some advice for "Bad" Chad Dawson -- stay away from Bernard Hopkins. Dawson, who seems to be a likable and decent guy is a very skilled fighter with hopefully some big-fights down the road. At age 26 he owns a piece of the light heavyweight title and is perceived to be the top fighter in the division, with the possible exception of Hopkins. It's no secret Chad Dawson represents the future of the light heavyweight division, not Hopkins.

At this stage of his career Bernard Hopkins can get over by just winning fights and doesn't have to be a crowd pleaser or look impressive. Hopkins is an all-time great who is fighting to enhance his legacy by leaps and bounds along with getting richer without getting hurt. Dawson, doesn't have that luxury being in his mid twenties and approaching his prime. During his last fight this past weekend versus Antonio Tarver, Dawson showed that when he cuts loose and lets his punches go that being a professional fighter was the right career choice. However, it was correctly noted during the HBO broadcast that "Bad" Chad doesn't fight with a sense of urgency that appeals to boxing fans. When they see a fighter put together physically as well as Dawson, he better be somewhat exciting to watch in more than just spurts if he's not a big puncher who routinely produces sensational knockouts.

With his decision win over former champ Antonio Tarver, Dawson doesn't have to worry about seeing him again or his southpaw style. Having said that, Chad won no less than eight rounds of the twelve round bout. The question everyone who's followed Dawson is asking now is, "who's next?" To that my retort is -- I think I know who I'd stay away from and shouldn't be next, Bernard Hopkins. There are a million reasons why I say this, and they have more to do with than just "Dead Presidents" being on the front of them.

The next time Dawson fights he needs to look good and give boxing fans a reason to want to see him again. Bernard Hopkins will not allow that and will definitely see to it that's not the scenario that unfolds, because he's made his living doing that to younger fighters over the last three or four years. Hopkins posses a wealth of ploys and tactics that Dawson's not only never seen before, but has no idea they exist.

If Dawson were to meet Hopkins, there are so many things about that fight which can be said with total impunity. For starters, Hopkins isn't bothered a bit fighting southpaws. At age 44, Hopkins is troubled by quickness and an opponent whose style constitutes bell-to-bell action. Which isn't who Dawson is. Chad's complacency and tendency to let his opponent sometime assume the role as the aggressor would allow Hopkins free rein to call on every trick in the book and maybe even invent a few in the process.

The fact Dawson isn't a big puncher -- along with Hopkins having a cast iron chin guarantees the fight will go the distance. That means Dawson will be forced to fight mistake free and keep Hopkins from getting to him in one form or another for 36 long minutes. Plenty of time for Hopkins to bend the rules unintentionally of course, just because he can. Another thing for Dawson to worry about is -- what if Chad's in there with a Hopkins who suddenly discovers

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father time has finally caught him and he can't win or beat Chad up. Is there a morsel of a doubt that Hopkins will fight to make Dawson look foolish and inept rather than to win?

Suppose for argument sake that Dawson were to beat Hopkins if they fight, something that is quite plausible, there's no way he'll look good doing it. The focus will end up being on what he should've done instead of what he did. Sure he can get the decision. Meaning under the best-case scenario he'll look about as convincing as Jermain Taylor and Joe Calzaghe did when they beat Hopkins on the scorecards at age 40 and 43. On the other hand -- Dawson, who's better than Kelly Pavlik was, but not quite as flowered as Antonio Tarver was when he fought Hopkins, could look every bit as ordinary and bad as they did on the losing end.

At this time I think Dawson should fight a rematch with Glen Johnson. Johnson's aggressive style could impose Chad to come out of himself and showcase his physical skills. Along with that Johnson will be there to hit, it's not like he'll have to look for Glen. It's also a plus that Johnson is a seasoned pro like Hopkins, which will help ready him a little better for Bernard.

I believe that Dawson should let Hopkins go out and campaign for the fight to be made, as he's aging by the minute. Hopefully, for both fighters the money will be more significant and it'll make more sense for Dawson to take the risk. The last thing Chad needs is to have to fight the next couple years trying to shed the image of getting dismantled by Hopkins, like Kelly Pavlik is in the process of doing now. In order for the reward/risk to be worth it to fight Hopkins, Dawson has to get paid.