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Ten months ago at Manchester's MEN Arena, Amir Khan was lying stretched on the canvas, having been starched in 54 seconds by an obscure lightweight. On Saturday the Briton returned to the venue of his humiliation by Breidis Prescott and exuded self-assurance in defeating one of the world's premier 140-pounders, Andreas Kotelnik, to capture the WBA championship.

Khan utilized his vastly superior speed advantage to nullify Kotelnik's technical proficiency, whipping out a stream of rangy left jabs and right crosses to prevent the Ukrainian from settling into his habitually methodical rhythm. Two of the judges evaluated the 12 round contest by scores of 118-111, while the third saw it 120-108.

Khan was rarely ruffled throughout the 36 minutes of action, as a new-found discipline saw him employ trainer Freddie Roach's strategy with textbook precision. Kotelnik normally plays the role of counter-puncher, but he was rarely permitted to connect cleanly and was forced to chase Khan, who routinely escaped to a safe distance after unleashing blistering combinations. Khan never landed with notable force, instead fighting off the back foot while firing hasty barrages that perplexed the heavy-footed Kotelnik.

"I tired a little in the later rounds, but I was never hurt," revealed Khan, 20-1 (15 KOs), after the contest. "Freddie won this fight for me. I listened to him. I never doubted that I would pull this off. We knew that speed would be the key."

Kotelnik, 31-2-1 (13 KOs), is not a noted puncher, which likely persuaded Khan's promoter Frank Warren to risk the popular yet shaky-chinned fighter who has been rocked and dropped by indistinct opposition. On the few occasions that Kotelnik landed with a flush punch, Khan remained steady and covered up tightly before answering with a rapid flurry.

Reportedly intense sparring sessions with Manny Pacquiao at Los Angeles' Wild Card Gym have likely forced Khan to develop a sturdy composure when under pressure. And while Khan did still seem a little nervy when Kotelnik would unload a vigorous combination, such anxiety is expected given the 22-year-old's past experiences.

"I took a few shots but didn't rush. I used to, but those mistakes have gone," said Khan.

"Khan is still learning," added Warren. "He will improve even more."

It would be understandable if Khan is matched carefully in the near-term. He is a solid ticket-seller in the UK and one of the few fighters that can carry a pay-per-view event. Moreover, it is still unclear how he would react to the challenge that a powerful, physically imposing pressure fighter would likely bring. Imminent matchups with the likes of Marcos Maidana and Ricardo Torres will probably be avoided, and a showdown with Ricky Hatton has been mooted by Warren.

Khan's exceptional speed would likely see him prevail against the Manchester native, who is evidently past his prime and may not return to the ring after his brutal knockout loss to Pacquiao last May.

And while Hatton was not present at ringside on Saturday, another famous British fighter made a rare public appearance. Naseem Hamed eagerly cheered on Khan and predicted great things for the victor. And while Amir can now claim to be a technically finer prizefighter than his compatriot, his performance on Saturday lacked the drama and power-punching that typically characterized an event involving the "Prince."

Khan's ability be develop into a global attraction remains uncertain, but his determination to succeed is unquestionable. From the opening bell on Saturday he sought to impose his desired quick tempo on the contest and he followed through on his objective over the fight's course.

Roach was forced to warn Khan about "reaching with the right hand" in the early rounds but he avoided danger until the third when Kotelnik found success with a precise combination to the body and head. Yet Khan refused to allow his foe to settle and continued with a high output that was visibly frustrating Kotelnik by the sixth round.

By the bout's halfway point the German-based Ukrainian began throwing uncharacteristically wild hooks in desperate attempts to catch the swift Khan, but Kotelnik's new approach did little to dent the Briton's confidence as he easily evaded the untamed punches, much to the crowd's delight.

Before the start of the eight frame, Roach cautioned Khan to not "swing" and keep his "head down and eyes up" in the face of Kotelnik's aggression. The advice was duly heeded by Khan, and by the final stages of the bout the 31-year-old Kotelnik was unable to sustain an attack, with his reddened face a testament to the frantic pace.

While statistics show that Khan managed to land with just 18 percent of his punches, he threw 878 blows that continually confounded his more experienced opponent.

"Amir fought a beautiful fight," reckoned Roach. "I thought he won every round."

Khan is not yet a complete fighter, but he has come a long way in ten months, and with additional seasoning a prolonged career at world championship level is assured.

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