

Pavlik Vs. Williams: It's The Right Time For Both

Written by Frank Lotierzo
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On the same day that reports have surfaced that WBC heavyweight champ Vitali Klitschko will defend his title against top five contender Chris Arreola this coming September, it's also being rumored that WBO/WBC middleweight champ Kelly Pavlik 35-1 (31) will defend his title against Paul Williams 37-1 (27) this coming October 3rd. If Pavlik-Williams is finalized it will air on HBO's World Championship Boxing, being that HBO has already agreed to put up a sizeable percentage of the purse for the fighters.

This is a very compelling and risky fight for both Pavlik and Williams. The fact is there are not many high profile opponents available for either of them to fight that quasi boxing fans would care much about. With IBF middleweight champ Arthur Abraham already agreeing to participate in Showtime's super-middleweight tournament, that only leaves WBA champ Felix Sturm for Pavlik to make a unification fight with. Perhaps having a unification showdown with Pavlik and Sturm would garner some interest, but other than a couple days before the fight it wouldn't get much attention.

As for Williams, with the unexpected passing of former two-time champ Vernon Forrest, other than a fight with WBA welterweight champ Shane Mosley, there really isn't a big name opponent for him to meet. And even Mosley isn't a given unless the money was too huge for him to walk away from. No doubt Shane knows that Williams' size and style would present him all kind of problems, that it's not worth taking the loss without being fully compensated.

This is why Pavlik-Williams is the right fight for both fighters from a business vantage point and then some. The reality is both Pavlik and Williams are catching each other at the right time. The reason the fight makes sense for Pavlik is because Williams is one of the most talented and physically gifted young fighters in boxing, who hasn't yet reached his physical peak yet nor has he fully flowered as a fighter. In his last fight versus Winky Wright, Williams put on a clinic due to his work rate and varied attack. Other than an abundance of experience Wright didn't have much to worry Williams with. Therefore with the threat of being hurt not really a factor, Williams had an almost free rein to throw so much at Wright that Winky was so occupied with trying to stabilize the fight that he really never had a chance to make Williams do anything that he wanted or needed him to do.

As good as Williams is, he's going to get better. He will gain a little more strength as he matures along with confidence and experience. Paul has all the punches down and knows when to throw what punch when, constantly keeping his opponent guessing what's coming next, which is an instinct most fighters don't have. Once he truly believes in himself mentally as much as he does physically, he'll be the type fighter for whom it's only worth fighting him for the title or an astronomical amount of money. That's why it's smart for Pavlik to fight him sooner, rather than in a year when he'd even be more of a nightmare.

For Williams, getting Pavlik one fight removed from being taken apart by Bernard Hopkins is great. Ever since being schooled by Hopkins, Pavlik has been in denial. Instead of accepting

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the fact that it wasn't a matter of Hopkins having a good night and him having a bad one, his progress will be stymied. The truth is Hopkins showed and exposed Pavlik to things he'd never seen before in the ring, something Bernard has made a career out of doing to less experienced fighters. What Kelly needs to do is accept he had a bad night for one reason, Hopkins made it that way.

At this time Pavlik doesn't possess the mindset of a fighter who feels invincible. He very easily could begin to second guess himself if he got off to a bad start against a fighter like Williams who he would have to control physically in order to beat. Hopkins took Pavlik's power and high work rate out of the fight. Basically, Bernard took the bullets out of Pavlik's gun. Granted, Williams can't school Pavlik the way Hopkins did, but he brings just enough in size, reach and a diversified attack that he may be able to stay a step ahead of him, as opposed to slowing down the fight and forcing him to think his way through it, like Hopkins did.

Based on some turmoil that's been around Pavlik and a not so steady mindset, Williams is getting Pavlik at a time when he's most vulnerable. It's just a question of whether or not Williams is confident enough to attempt getting into Kelly's head emotionally and then giving him a reason to doubt himself at the onset of the fight.

On the other hand Pavlik is stronger and can punch. Against Hopkins, Pavlik's power was negated by the fact that Hopkins has a cast-iron chin and even more than that, Bernard made him miss and was barely touched by Pavlik. This is a scenario that I doubt will unfold against Williams. I believe that Pavlik will catch Williams during the fight much more so than he did Hopkins. The difference being instead of being embarrassed in the process, he'll be met with multiple punches from a guy who he'll think has eight arms. Lastly, let's not forget Williams' chin has never been tested, especially by a puncher like Pavlik.

On paper Kelly Pavlik versus Paul Williams is a very intriguing fight and one that's a must see!

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