

Arthur Abraham Is Slow, Not Fluid, Very Deliberate...But Also Very Tough

Written by Frank Lotierzo

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Arthur Abraham has a style that can make certain types of fighters look very good. If you're not familiar with him and are watching him for the first time, you might ask yourself why he's undefeated. He's slow and deliberate, not fluid in any noticeable way, and doesn't throw a great number of punches. However, when those punches land, they land as thuds, not as lightning strikes. He's the kind of fighter whose physical presence while bearing down on you can sap an opponents' strength more so than other fighters do when they connect.

Abraham is also the only one of the six fighters in Showtime's Super Six Booking Classic, which kicks off this Saturday night at 8:00 (with the Carl Froch/Andre Dirrell fight to immediately follow), who is still actively campaigning in the middleweight division. So, again, if you were watching him for the first time, you might be inclined to wonder whether he had the necessary physical strength to hang with someone as rugged as Mikkel Kessler, to name one particularly imposing participant.

Once you've watched Arthur Abraham for six rounds, though, you start to think "This guy would be very tough to beat." Things that aren't immediately apparent emerge as the fight progresses. It becomes clear how focused and intelligent a fighter he is, how much useful boxing/ring strength (as opposed to meaningless weight lifting football type strength) he has, and how those thuds that didn't seem like much in the first few rounds eventually add up to something debilitating to anyone who's got to take them. If you're a fighter who harbors the slightest doubt down the stretch, Abraham has the capacity to bring it out.

Jermain Taylor is the anti-Arthur Abraham. His boxing attributes, such as they are, don't need sophisticated deciphering. He's aggressive and confident, can punch some, and brings a lot of strength to the table. When he remembers to be, he's a decent boxer too. But his attack is sometimes predictable and that makes him a little easier to defend against.

But since winning and retaining the middleweight title in 2005 on close decisions over Bernard Hopkins, Taylor's star has dimmed dramatically. He was gifted with a draw while being totally schooled by Winky Wright, managed to push around but not dominate the small and unspectacular Kassim Ouma, and was again gifted (this time with a split decision win) while being totally schooled by Cory Spinks, another small guy. And then the bottom fell out from under him.

After dropping Kelly Pavlik, Taylor got reckless and was himself knocked out in highlight reel fashion. Five months later he lost by clear cut decision in the rematch at super middleweight. And in some corners the fact that he wasn't stopped was somewhat of a victory for him.

Taylor came back to easily decision the mostly depleted Jeff Lacy in what can be seen as a much deserved breather. Then, in April, he was again brutally knocked out—this time by Carl Froch—in a fight that he would have won, had he lasted another fourteen seconds.

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An argument can be made that Jermain Taylor won the title in a high profile fight at a stage in his career when he wasn't ready for Prime Time. The counter-argument is that he really isn't that good to begin with, so rushing him to stardom was the only prudent choice to make on his behalf from a business/management vantage point.

I think the truth lies somewhere in the middle. It's worth noting that, aside from Ouma and Lacy, Jermain Taylor hasn't been given an easy fight in years. He has yet to lose a fight that he wasn't very much in. Probably his most one-sided loss—in the second Pavlik fight—was by far his least dramatic. And he was entirely competitive in that one.

It's been written repeatedly that Saturday night is it for Jermain Taylor. Losing relegates him to the rank of high priced stepping stone. Everyone reading this knows that. Jermain Taylor certainly knows it too.

But he's got a lot to think about. He has to come out and make a statement, establish control of the fight, and get Arthur Abraham's respect from the opening bell. Given the MO of both fighters, he ought to be able to do that. But there are two looming questions. Will Taylor have it in the back of his mind that, on two occasions when he seemed to have important fights won, he wound up unconscious? And is he a guy who simply isn't made to hold up to twelve rounds of hard combat?

Expect Taylor to try and send a message to Abraham early so he doesn't attempt to take his liberties with him. Then look for Jermain to box smartly doing just enough to win rounds without putting his chin or stamina at risk. It's doubtful Taylor will cut loose unless Abraham looks to be in peril or has forced him to fight him off. On the other hand Abraham will be deliberate and look to plant the seed of doubt in Taylor mentally and then break him physically.

I'm leaning towards Abraham by late stoppage.

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