

Paul Williams Really Needs The 5% That A Top Trainer Would Add

Written by Frank Lotierzo

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This past weekend Paul Williams 38-1 (27) and Sergio Martinez 44-2-2 (24) put on one of the better fights of 2009. The two southpaws both scored knockdowns in the first round and both got up and fought with everything they had for the next eleven rounds. When it was over, Williams left the ring with a majority decision victory.

Judge Lynne Carter scored it 115-113 Williams, Julie Lederman saw it 114-114 and Pierre Benoist had it 119-110 for Williams. As far as the scoring Carter and Lederman saw the fight that actually transpired (I scored it a draw 115-115). And judge Benoist should have his license revoked immediately and never be allowed to score a professional fight again. Which anyone reading this knows won't happen. He'll be hidden for a little while working lower profile fights and then we'll see him again working another big fight after the outrage over his scoring of Williams-Martinez subsides.

One of the backdrops before the fight was how Williams was short on opponents to fight. However, Sergio Martinez took care of that and a rematch between the two top junior middleweights would be terrific. A bigger story emerging from the fight this past Saturday night is how Williams has stagnated as a fighter despite the enormous physical talent he possesses.

Before touching on Williams and what he has to do to advance his career and growth as a fighter, it must be noted that Sergio Martinez may come out of this fight as the most avoided fighter in boxing. He's a very shrewd and cagey fighter and everyone saw how tough he is, but beating him doesn't carry the prestige of beating Williams.

As the Williams-Martinez fight progressed it was astonishing how no one noticed that all Martinez had to do (and he did it) was take one step back, pull his head and shoulders back when Williams over-committed his punches (which left his hands totally extended and his feet off balance), and then come over the top with the quick right hook. He did it all night (and added that great left to the body later in the fight), but nobody figured out what he was doing. It was a very smart move, but it's wasn't exactly impossible to anticipate once he'd done it the first hundred times.

Emanuel Steward never caught it nor did he mention it once during the broadcast of the fight. All he was interested in talking about was how Martinez would succumb to Williams' unrelenting pressure and how sure he was that Paul was a much tougher guy than Sergio. You think he still feels that way after watching them go at each other during the last six rounds of the fight?

The one thing Steward did mention during the bout was how tough it is to fight a tall guy who puts a lot of pressure on his opponent like Williams was doing against Martinez. What he failed to mention was Williams is all over the place in his pursuit when forced to fight as the aggressor for a majority of the bout. Williams has big problems finding his range and follows his opponent around the ring instead of using his body trying to get into position to take away their lateral movement. Paul tried to use his reach to cut the ring off on Martinez and that left him open to

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the lead counter. He also leaves his chin up in the air and was lucky Martinez wasn't a huge puncher.

Williams must learn that he must step in with his punches instead of reaching and pushing with them. Granted, his work rate does help nullify some of his fundamental shortcomings, but he would be much more dangerous if he utilized his tremendous size and natural ability to his fullest which cannot be said about him at this time.

While watching the fight it was obvious to see that Williams doesn't aim his left cross with much accuracy and intent. It seems as if after he fires his right jab a couple times that he subconsciously says to himself, "I better shoot the left now because that's what it says in the boxing cookbook to do." As opposed to firing it with a purpose.

Based on his first fight with Carlos Quintana and his last fight with Sergio Martinez, it looks like the time has come for Williams to bring in a first tier trainer. Yes, he stopped Quintana in the first round of their rematch, but that was more the case of him catching Carlos early and hurting him than it was Williams actually solving him stylistically. These two fights highlight how greatly ineffective Williams can be reduced strategically if he's forced to push the fight from bell-to-bell. Instead of fundamentals and technique he relies on his physicality and athleticism and takes too many punches flush while moving to his opponent.

Williams really lunges when he has to push the fight and over-commits. He relies on his reach too much. I could see that if he couldn't punch or fight on the inside, but he can. Relying on his reach, in conjunction with his good inside work, wouldn't be a bad idea at all if he had any sense of range. But he really hasn't learned a sense of range at all yet.

In boxing it's the little tweaks and adjustments that make all the difference in the world. As stated here before boxing is 95% the fighter and 5% the trainer. But that 5% is huge and the fighter needs that to maximize his potential and ability. His closest counterpart talent-wise is Chad Dawson. And you can see how far Dawson has come with Eddie Mustafa Muhammad training him. Dawson clearly has better basics and fundamentals than Williams, which I'm sure Eddie Mustafa Muhammad has no doubt played a huge part in developing.

The plus for Paul Williams is he's so teachable and has a ton of heart. Technically he does more things wrong than he does right but is able to overcome his flaws foundation-wise because he's got tremendous height and reach and is enormously talented. Unlike guys like Roy Jones, he can be taught and therefore it wouldn't take much for him to become a more formidable fighter. His eagerness to learn makes him almost a diamond in the rough and the extra 5% a first-tier trainer could give him would make all the difference in the world. Just look at the 5% Freddie Roach has brought to Manny Pacquiao for undeniable proof.

If I were managing Paul Williams, I'd hook him up with a trainer who'd start the learning process over again with boxing basics and fundamentals 101. And once he tightened that part of his game up he could tweak him strategically a bit.

As of now Paul "The Punisher" Williams is still a work in progress.

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