

## Sergio Martinez Is No Gimme; Pavlik Better Pack Some Aspirin

Written by Rick Folstad  
Thursday, 15 April 2010 19:00

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Get plenty of rest, Kelly Pavlik.

Eat well, keep up your strength and don't forget to pack some aspirin for the post-fight press conference. You might need a little pain reliever by the time this thing is over. Plan on a long, busy, stressful night.

Pavlik (36-1, 32 KOs), of Youngstown, Ohio, defends his WBC/WBO middleweight titles against WBC junior-middleweight champ Sergio Gabriel Martinez (44-2-2, 24 KOs) of Madrid, Spain on tomorrow night at Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall. The HBO telecast will include IBF super-middleweight champion Lucian Bute defending his title against Edison Miranda from Montreal.

But Pavlik is the headliner and he needs to prove he deserves top billing.

Following his ugly loss to Bernard Hopkins and accusations that he was ducking tough fights even though he had a staph infection in his hand, his career took a knee. Now, it could use a healthy boost, and if he looks good against Martinez, he'll get it.

As for Sergio Martinez, don't count him out. He isn't some tomato can recruited off the tough streets of his native Argentina. Unless his fight against Paul "The Punisher" Williams this past December was some kind of magical trick, this guy is someone to be reckoned with.

Many say Martinez won the fight with Williams, including Pavlik, who said he had Martinez winning by a round or two. But the win went to Williams by majority decision, though one yahoo judge scored it 119-110 for Williams, which would be scary if it wasn't so laughable. Fight commentator Jim Lampley called the score a "travesty. Lampley was being kind. It was worse than that.

Where do they get these judges, the unemployment line?

"Hey Mac, want to pick up a couple hundred bucks for a few hours work? Be at the Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City on Saturday night. Got a suit? Wear it. Tell them at the door you're one of the judges, that the Weasel sent you."

Early in the first round of his fight with Williams, Martinez, a southpaw, went down from a glancing blow to his temple. He was back on his feet before they could start to count. Then late in the same round, he dropped Williams with a right hook that looked like it would have dented a Lexus. And it pretty much went that way for the next 11 rounds, Martinez landing that right hook and a few straight lefts that rocked Williams more than once. It was one of the best fights of 2009.

When it was over and they asked Martinez about the 119-110 score, he said the judge

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“exaggerated a little.

Nice guy.

Then they asked him who he would like to fight next.

“Floyd Mayweather Jr.

Too bad. Instead of Mayweather, he gets Pavlik.

Martinez will fight anyone within his weight range. You can't accuse him of ducking hard fights. He will have fought Williams and Pavlik - two of the top middleweights in the world - in a span of less than five months. He'd fight Godzilla if it could make weight.

Meanwhile, Pavlik, who was accused of ducking Williams - twice - is quickly rebuilding his reputation by taking on a tough, quick, gutsy Martinez.

Pavlik is the favorite in this fight. He's a naturally bigger guy and he has a bigger punch than Martinez. If he catches Martinez just right, it could be over. That's what's fun about big punchers. They can lose 11 rounds and still win it in the twelfth.

As for Martinez, he's one of the quickest junior-middles in the world. In fact, Lampley called Martinez “the fastest 154-pounder I have ever seen. He shows blinding speed when he wants to.”

Against Williams, he kept his head moving and at times, would drop his hands, slipping punches and countering. He was landing more shots than he took.

Before his close loss to Williams, Martinez hadn't lost a fight since February 2000, when he was stopped in the seventh round by Antonio Margarito back when he was fighting as a welterweight.

Now, going up to middleweight might slow him down, but it also might give him more pop to his punch.

“I didn't see anything overly impressive, Pavlik said after watching the Martinez-Williams fight. “But he's somebody you've got to respect. You can't go in there face first.”

Don't forget to pack the aspirin.