

Martinez Had The Answers; And For Pavlik Questions Still Remain

Written by Frank Lotierzo
Saturday, 17 April 2010 19:00

This past weekend new WBC/WBO middleweight title-holder Sergio Martinez 45-5-2 (23) confirmed the answers to some of the questions that were attached to him as a fighter. Yes, he can win a big fight and finish like a champ versus an upper-tier fighter with everything on the line. For his opponent Kelly Pavlik 36-2 (32), the questions that lingered over him before the fight have either been confirmed in the negative or, at best, still exist.

The Pavlik-Martinez fight came down to a slow plodding power puncher versus a speedy and unorthodox southpaw with quick feet and hands. Kelly Pavlik is a heavy handed fighter whose offense is very vanilla and unimaginative, not to mention being almost devoid of a serious uppercut to set up his opponent once hes on top of them. When hes matched up with an unconventional fighter like Martinez , he looks almost robotic; you can see him trying to think his way through the bout as it progresses.

Martinezs lateral movement and foot-speed really bothered Pavlik through the first four rounds of the fight. The thing that set the tempo in the early rounds was how Martinez first moved to his left and then to the right as he picked his spots and flurried at a stationary Pavlik, who was coming in straight while not cutting the ring off effectively, trying to impose his size and strength advantage. Once Martinez had Pavlik out of sync and a step behind strategically, he changed up again and moved exclusively to the right in a circular motion. This caused Pavlik two problems in which he had no answer for: 1) by moving to the right, Martinez took away his bread and butter punch (his right hand) by making him have to reach across his body trying to land it and 2) due to his wide stance reaching for Martinez, he was left wide open for Sergio to come over the top with quick left leads and double lefts that landed flush and eventually busted him up.

In the middle rounds Pavlik started to throw straight lefts and rights down the middle at Martinez chest, a tactic that kept Martinez off of him because he was being knocked out of range and, as everyone saw, his counters were coming up short. Punches and combinations that were landing early on Pavlik were now short of the target. This enabled Pavlik to get closer and move Martinez around the ring and take control of the fight physically. Unfortunately for Pavlik, Martinez tied him up and shut down whatever inside fighting that Kelly tried to muster. And Sergio knew he could live with Pavlik inside because Kelly cant get off and the exchange would be quickly broken by the referee enabling him to get away and establish his rhythm and timing from outside.

Just when it looked as if Pavlik had turned the fight in his favor after dropping Martinez with a right hand, the fight got away from him. In the ninth round Martinez took advantage of Pavliks low punch output and started to retaliate with more flurries. As a result he opened a cut near Pavliks right eye. Once the cut began to bleed Pavlik became more tentative and basically followed Martinez around the ring throwing one punch at a time. Martinez sensed that Pavlik was just fighting to keep from being overwhelmed and seized the moment and started moving to his left and right while pot-shotting the slow and predictable target that Pavlik presented.

Martinez Had The Answers; And For Pavlik Questions Still Remain

Written by Frank Lotierzo
Saturday, 17 April 2010 19:00

Martinez swept the last four rounds of the fight and was awarded a unanimous decision by the scores of 115-111, 116-111 and 115-112. I had it 115-112 for Martinez. For the first third of the fight, Martinez used his hand and footspeed along with his unconventional attack to neutralize Pavlik's power and strength. When Pavlik adjusted during the middle rounds by throwing straight shots down the middle he had Martinez fighting in retreat and forced him to change his game. Only Martinez didn't change his game - he picked up on Pavlik not throwing more than two punches at a time. This enabled him to take more chances, which he did. For every couple of punches Pavlik attempted to get off, Martinez answered with quick two-handed flurries and then got out—a pattern that repeated itself throughout the last third of the fight.

Kelly Pavlik is a good fighter, but he's limited. With an upper-tier trainer, perhaps he could be made into a solid fighter who would be able to beat the best guys in his division. He'll never have speed, and his skin will always give him trouble. But he's a good puncher with the right, and if one more dimension was added to his arsenal, he could be a lot better than he currently is. And why Jack Loew didn't implore him after the tenth round that he had to let everything go is beyond me. He should've gone for broke in the last two or maybe three rounds.

Sergio Martinez is in the driver's seat and deservedly so. He's now fought Paul Williams to a virtual standstill and has a solid win over Kelly Pavlik. If I were him I'd fight Pavlik in a rematch because he must feel that he has his number and is equipped physically to beat him again and knows Kelly has trouble making 160. Then I'd go for Paul Williams in what would be one of the more compelling fights in recent history between two middleweights.

Frank Lotierzo can be contacted at GlovedFist@Gmail.com