

Bute's Win Further Calls Super Six Into Question

Written by Frank Lotierzo
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I don't know whether or not Lucian Bute is the best super middleweight in the world. But no serious conversation about who actually is can be conducted without his being a part of it. In his last two fights, the IBF champion has closed the show with highlight reel one punch knockouts -- both lethal left uppercuts. One was a body shot landed on Librado Andrade, someone who nobody ever hurts, the other placed just under the chin of Edison Miranda, who'd recently taken Andre Ward the distance.

While watching Bute-Miranda it was clear that Bute had been hurting Edison Miranda with hard uppercuts to the body throughout the third round of their abbreviated fight. About midway through the round, a left uppercut identical to the one that had felled Librado Andrade for the count almost did the same to Miranda, who masked his distress by pounding his own abs. A moment later, another shot hurt him. This time Miranda posed, then charged with his head down, making Bute's perfectly timed uppercut all the more potent. Edison thudded face first to the canvas. Although his conditioning allowed him to beat the count, he was finished; referee Ernie Sharif didn't think twice about stopping it.

Lucian Bute has proved that he is more than a hometown attraction, although he's certainly that. He's consistently able to draw 15,000 people into the Bell Center in Montreal. He's an interesting fighter, who doesn't fight much like anyone else. He moves well in either direction, but he's not fast footed. He has somewhat quick hands, but more significantly, his punches are sudden. Bute has a very good eye: he's able to spot openings extremely well, and he fires almost automatically into them. He operates behind a good, solid right jab that is often followed by the straight left. Although he punches in combination, I don't think that he systematically works out these combinations as much as he senses where they should go. This might mean that he looks like a bigger puncher than he actually is. The hook that Floyd Mayweather used to knock out Ricky Hatton might cause someone watching him for the first time to assume they were seeing a big puncher. Although I'll give Bute credit for having more power than Mayweather, I can't see these recent one punch knockouts as suggesting another Thomas Hearn (as Max Kellerman suggested during his interview after the Miranda fight.)

What you're seeing in Lucian Bute is, a fighter with a good degree of natural talent who is dangerous because he sees what's in front of him, and he fights a little scared. I don't mean that as a criticism. It's one of the things that has kept him undefeated so far. He doesn't freeze because of it; it somewhat keeps him in alert mode. He looked like he had a healthy respect for Edison Miranda's power for the first two rounds of their fight. It wasn't until he'd decided that he could get in and out with combinations against his lead-footed opponent that he grew a little less cautious.

This isn't to suggest that Lucien Bute won't fight if it comes to that. But he likes to dictate the terms whenever possible. He was able to control both Miranda and Andrade (another very slow-footed guy) with a double jab, a punch he uses to both maintain distance and to direct opponents. That distance is important to him, and it's worth noting that even his excellent

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uppercuts are thrown with a scythe-like motion from what is a conventional uppercut. He's able to get away with throwing them because of his accuracy and timing.

People undoubtedly would like to see how he'd do against Super Six tournament fighters like Andre Ward, Andre Dirrell, Arthur Abraham, and Carl Froch.

Since that's not going to happen for the near future, I've got another suggestion. He should fight Kelly Pavlik. It makes sense for everybody involved. And even though he'd be favored to beat the former middleweight champion, especially after Pavlik's poor showing against Sergio Martinez shown on the same HBO broadcast as Bute-Miranda, it's not a fight without risks. Pavlik can always punch, even late into his fights.

The fight would draw a huge crowd in Montreal. From a risk/reward perspective, it's by far the best fight Kelly Pavlik could take. He doesn't need to come back with a tune-up or a confidence builder. His career is at a standstill, and he needs to jump back into the deep end and see what happens. It's clear that things couldn't get worse for him than they are now, unless he loses to a fringe opponent, which could happen if Martinez took away what remained of his confidence. Better to roll the dice against a big name, and go out on his shield if necessary.

If Bute could stop Pavlik, it would continue his ascent into the upper echelon of the game. He has a style that's well suited to doing that. Kelly cuts and, as a result, tends to walk straight into shots that he can't see. If he walks into one like the one that kayoed Edison Miranda, it might well kayo him too. The question is what happens if Pavlik is able to land his big right. He'd be smart to find out if he can do that.

Lucian Bute is not going to do well moving up in weight -- his body is well suited to 168 and he can't move down. Facing Pavlik would be a good place keeping fight for him to take while waiting for the Super Six dust to clear. At this point, I'm not sure that Kelly Pavlik is much more dangerous than Edison Miranda was, although the benefits from knocking him out are far greater.

For Miranda, it's back to ESPN Friday Night Fights, possibly as no more than a prestigious opponent. We know what he can do. And, unfortunately for him, we know what he can't.

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