

Rooting For Chambers Is A Lot Different Than Picking Him To Beat Wlad

Written by Frank Lotierzo
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When American heavyweight contender Eddie Chambers 35-1 (18) tries to wrest the IBF/WBO titles from Wladimir Klitschko 53-3 (47) tomorrow, he'll be giving up nearly six inches in height and 30 pounds in weight. Size doesn't necessarily win fights (see Joshua Clottey), but it sure helps. Especially when the bigger guy is great at utilizing his size and reach to shut his smaller opponent down and can also really punch. Add that to Klitschko's huge advantage in experience and fighting in title bouts, it makes Chambers task that much taller if you will.

It's been suggested recently how Chambers has the advantage in hand and foot speed, is the better boxer and also carries some pop in his punch. It's also been said that Klitschko's chin is susceptible and he fights more so out of self preservation than with the intent to destroy and overwhelm his opponent. Although that's mostly true, it cannot be said as a blanket statement. Reaching Wladimir's chin is no easy task and two of the fighters who did get through to it and stopped him were both recognized as exceptional punchers.

Granted, Wladimir has been stopped by all three of the opponents who have defeated him. But the reality is he ran out of gas against Ross Puritty in the 11th round back in 1998 in only his second year fighting as a pro, despite being in control of the bout most of the way. Then in 2003 and 2004 he was stopped by Corrie Sanders and Lamon Brewster. Sanders stood 6"4" and was a southpaw who could really punch with his left cross. And he jumped on Wladimir early and got him out in the second round after dropping him four times. In his fight against Brewster 13 months later, he was beating Lamon from pillar to post and punched himself out. Thus setting himself up for Brewster to topple him with basically one big punch in the fifth round. Not to mention, Brewster can really hit if he catches you cleanly.

Since losing to Brewster six years ago, Klitschko has gone 11-0 and only two fighters have gone the distance with him. Yet he still has plenty of detractors and is seen by some factions as holding the division down. This contention is laughable. If he's so bad, why hasn't he been taken down by one of the other killers in the heavyweight division? Maybe because he's more formidable than he's perceived to be and is fighting in a division in which every fighter among the top-10 will be a week old ghost seven days after they retire. Most of the top contenders in the division share the sentiment that nobody has stepped up and seized the division from either Wladimir or Vitali Klitschko.

Rob Murray Sr. who is Chambers' manager-trainer said recently, "Klitschko cannot fight on the inside, and he won't fight on the inside. When you get close to him, he grabs and clinches.

"He only wants to fight you at arm's length. He's able to get away with that because he really doesn't jab; he paws at you, paws at you with that long left hand, trying to set you up for the overhand right.

"If you get inside those long arms, Klitschko will turn his back on you. He automatically goes to the ropes. It's almost like he's trying to get out of the ring."

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After hearing Murray's assessment of Wladimir Klitschko, it's amazing that's he has gone undefeated over the last six years and only lost perhaps four out of the 24 rounds he fought against the only two fighters that lasted the distance with him.

I'll give Murray this much, Wladimir may not be a life-taker on the inside, but the real issue is how do you get inside on him? And if you do, can a fighter six inches shorter than him really be effective with his uppercut on the inside? If you answer that, no, as it should be answered, that leaves the left hook as your fighter's primary weaponry inside. I'd like to think Chambers could win the battle of trading hooks with Wladimir Klitschko, but I'm more of a realist than an optimist.

Murray also says Klitschko only wants to fight you at arms length and can get away with it because he paws at you with his long left trying to set you up for the overhand right. Once again, he's right but over-simplistic and short sighted. If only he would've went a step or two further and explained exactly how you draw Klitschko out of his comfort zone if you can't initiate him to trade jabs. And for Eddie Chambers to do that he must step to Wladimir, something Klitschko would welcome because it would lessen the degree of difficulty for him to nail Chambers with that big overhand right on the way in.

Murray also adds when you get close to Klitschko he grabs and clinches. Another fair point. And again, exactly what can Eddie do about that? His only weapon to somewhat neutralize that is to have already sent his punches towards Klitschko's body while his arms are up looking to pull Chambers in. And even at that Chambers isn't a body puncher and Wladimir will take that tradeoff all night long.

"Opponents buy into that whole 'Dr. Steelhammer' bull, that his right hand is so devastating that they have to stay away from it. That allows Klitschko to stand back and have his way with most guys," said Murray.

I don't know what Mr. Murray has been watching, but the jury has already returned the verdict on whether or not Wladimir can really crack with his right hand. And it's unanimous. Those who have either fought or sparred with Klitschko all agree that his right hand is one of the biggest single weapons and punches in the division. It would serve Chambers well to assume that Wladimir is capable of altering the fight with one clean right hand at any time during the fight from round one through twelve.

Eddie Chambers is a breath of fresh air in the division and his confidence seems to be soaring at this time - and that can never be discounted in a fight. He's a very capable and skilled boxer who's easy to root for. And if he were to upset Wladimir it would be at the least a short term infusion into the heavyweight division. That said, Eddie not a big puncher and he doesn't really fight tall (although he was brilliant against Alexander Dimitrenko), so that leaves the question open as to whether or not he possesses the necessary tools needed for the execution.

It looks from here that Wladimir Klitschko is a little too big and holds too significant a significant style advantage to be taken down by a fighter who'll have to fight and engage him for 12-rounds to win. If that weren't enough for Eddie Chambers to overcome, Klitschko is going to get every conceivable break fighting in Germany. So in order for him to get a decision nod he'd have to

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beat Wladimir beyond recognition.

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