

Is Vitali Klitschko The Second Greatest Heavyweight Over 40?

Written by Frank Lotierzo

Monday, 05 September 2011 21:51



This coming Saturday WBC heavyweight title holder Vitali Klitschko 42-2 (39), who just turned 40 a little over a month ago, will make the sixth defense of the title he won back in October of 2008 after a nearly four year period of inactivity. Klitschko's opponent this weekend is the very capable but physically limited former cruiserweight title holder Tomasz Adamek 44-1 (28). On paper Adamek doesn't have many tools in his arsenal to relieve Klitschko of the title. If you're working Adamek's corner, what is it exactly that you try to implore Tomasz to do against Vitali in order to get him past Klitschko? He can't win fighting from the outside and if he tries to get inside, where he should hold the advantage, he will probably have his senses scrambled on the way in.

From what I've seen, Adamek doesn't have a big enough punch to bother Klitschko or make him do anything he doesn't want to. On top of that I've seen him shook by punchers who are far

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inferior to Klitschko when it comes to single shot power. And it's not like Adamek is a fast, fleet-footed boxer who can use the ring and pick his spots and fight Vitali on his own terms. So at the end of the day it's not plausible to see a way for Adamek to score the upset. Then again, if Vitali's aging body betrays him, something that's always mentioned whenever he fights, Adamek does have a chance. However, I'll go out on a short ledge and predict that Klitschko's older body doesn't falter and Vitali stops Adamek inside the distance.

Assuming that Klitschko beats Adamek this coming weekend, then again not that it matters for this argument, is it fair to say that Vitali is at worst the second best heavyweight or perhaps even the best heavyweight champ to fight after turning 40? The only other fighter who there can even be a case made for is former champ George Foreman, who knocked out Michael Moorer three months shy of his 46th birthday to capture the lineal heavyweight title. Then again Foreman lost every second of that fight until he nailed Moorer with a short right hand on his chin that dropped him as if he were shot by a sniper sitting at ringside. And although George won the title when he was 45, his best fights during his comeback were fought in between 1990 and 1991 when he was 41 and 42. Who can forget the accuracy and devastating power he exhibited knocking out Gerry Cooney and Adilson Rodrigues in 1990 and then taking undisputed champ Evander Holyfield the distance and giving as good as he took before dropping a unanimous decision to him at age 42 in 1991?

There've been other past champs who fought beyond the age of 40 and had more than moderate success, like Larry Holmes and Evander Holyfield. The difference between them when compared to Foreman and Klitschko is they weren't really a threat to win the title after their 40th birthday. Foreman was a top contender and threat for five years after turning 40 and then won the title when he was closer to 46 than he was 45. As for Klitschko, with the exception of his younger brother Wladimir, who most observers think he would defeat if they ever fought, he's been the second best heavyweight in the world during his late 30's going into his 40's. And when you compare Vitali to Foreman, it's obvious that Klitschko wins his bouts implementing strategy and guile opposed to Foreman's off the chart wrecking ball power and physical strength and toughness.

Vitali Klitschko is one of the few heavyweights we've seen who actually has improved markedly as a boxer during his late 30's. Sure, Foreman learned how to pace himself during his second career, but he was vulnerable to fighters who used the ring and boxed him the way Holyfield, Tommy Morrison and Shannon Briggs did, after he turned 40. Whereas Klitschko usually makes his opponent come to him while he dismantles them in the process using his boxing intuition and aptitude along with his reach and strength.

The book isn't completely written on Vitali Klitschko's career at this time. But it's safe to say that at worst he's the second most successful heavyweight in boxing history who fought well into their late 30's and early 40's. And that doesn't change a morsel even if he were to be upset by Tomasz Adamek this weekend.

When it comes to old heavyweights, the list begins and ends with the names Foreman and Klitschko. And if by chance Klitschko continues to fight until 2016 at the same level he has over the last couple years, then he'd have to be at the top of the list. No, I don't see that happening

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because Vitali has shown a little stiffness and his timing and accuracy have been slightly off in a few of his recent bouts. But then again with today's nutrition and strength conditioning, nothing would surprise me.

Frank Lotierzo can be contacted at GlovedFist@Gmail.com

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brownsugar says:

no argument from me.

michaelabii says:

Great article ! Truth be told, I think many astute observers are reassessing thier opinions on Vitali. As a heavyweight he does everything well but I really think what stands out is his boxing intellect and mental discipline. While Vladimir apears to be the more natural athlete Vitali is the more intelligent fighter. He uses the ring well and adapts well to his opponents strenghs and weaknesses.

Radam G says:

HECK NO! Doc Vitali is not the "second greatest heavyweight over 40." He is the tallest and more hyped and has had the easiest bouts and the most sorry opposition of none-training, little-committed fat a\$\$es. Enough from me, because I know what time it is. The greatest heavyweight over 40 are George Foreman, Jack Johnson, Bob Fizeaux, Archie Moore, Jimmy Young, Evander Holyfield, James "Lights out" Toney and Larry Holmes. Holla!

FighterforJC says:

This article is a shameless insult at worst and a backhanded compliment at best. Can I nominate Muhammad Ali as the greatest heavyweight boxer suffering from Parkinson's disease? Vitali Klitschko has been more dominant in this era than Ali, Tyson or any of the other old timers could've ever dreamed of being in their era. Klitschko deserves credit from that. The opposition may be weak (though not nearly as weak as what old timers like to claim), but you'd be hard pressed to believe that Ali would've been as dominant as the Klitschkos had he fought today. There are at least a few Klitschko victims that would've given a prime Ali a serious run for his money. This is an ATL for Lotierzo.

Radam G says:

Joe Louis and Jack Johnson had a longer dominance than Doc Vitali. Hehehehehehe! Wow! I don't know which of doc's opponents would have given GOAT Ali any problem, except maybe Lennox Lewis who was outta shape and whup the doc's butt. Holla!

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ali says:

[QUOTE=FighterforJC;9189]This article is a shameless insult at worst and a backhanded compliment at best. Can I nominate Muhammad Ali as the greatest heavyweight boxer suffering from Parkinson's disease? Vitali Klitschko has been more dominant in this era than Ali, Tyson or any of the other old timers could've ever dreamed of being in their era. Klitschko deserves credit from that. The opposition may be weak (though not nearly as weak as what old timers like to claim), but you'd be hard pressed to believe that Ali would've been as dominant as the Klitschkos had he fought today. There are at least a few Klitschko victims that would've given a prime Ali a serious run for his money. This is an ATL for Lotierzo.[/QUOTE]

R u really that slow.....you be hard pressed to believe that Ali would've been as dominant as the Klits had he fought today....On everything I love if u believe that sh\$# u really dont know a damn thing about boxing.

ali says:

[QUOTE=FighterforJC;9189]This article is a shameless insult at worst and a backhanded compliment at best. Can I nominate Muhammad Ali as the greatest heavyweight boxer suffering from Parkinson's disease? Vitali Klitschko has been more dominant in this era than Ali, Tyson or any of the other old timers could've ever dreamed of being in their era. Klitschko deserves credit from that. The opposition may be weak (though not nearly as weak as what old timers like to claim), but you'd be hard pressed to believe that Ali would've been as dominant as the Klitschkos had he fought today. There are at least a few Klitschko victims that would've given a prime Ali a serious run for his money. This is an ATL for Lotierzo.[/QUOTE]

Another stupid thing u said I have to point out is.....Can u nominate Ali as the greatest heavyweight boxer suffering from Parkinson's disease....What the F does that have to do with him being the greatest heavyweight...Do u have problem with black fighters that speak there mind? Im starting to think that u do.

Condor says:

Over 40, there's not a heavyweight that beats Klitschko. Foreman had incredible, off-the-charts ring genius at that age (and a remarkable ring relaxation), but didn't have the speed to pierce Vitali, in my opinion. VK isn't mistake prone. He's got lethal power, is awkward, and takes a great shot (when he gets hit, which is rare). Vitali Klitschko has been the most dominant fighter in years. He dominates his competition by a much wider margin than the next best guy. It's just a fact. There's tons of Klitschko hatred, no doubt, and plenty of people wish he'd contract Lou Gehrig's disease, but there's no denying his dominance.

FighterforJC says:

[QUOTE=ali;9281]Another stupid thing u said I have to point out is.....Can u nominate Ali as the greatest heavyweight boxer suffering from Parkinson's disease....What the F does that have to do with him being the greatest heavyweight...Do u have problem with black fighters that speak there mind? Im starting to think that u do.[/QUOTE]

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Wow you really need some reading comprehension skillz (with a z, yo!).