

Vitali Klitschko Retires To Pursue Politics

Written by Frank Lotierzo

Tuesday, 17 December 2013 08:18



WBC heavyweight champion Vitali Klitschko has retired and given up his title to pursue politics in the Ukraine. Klitschko vacated his title on Monday and said he doesn't expect to fight again as he pursues a presidential bid in his home country, where citizens have been protesting for weeks in Kiev over President Viktor Yanukovich's decision to shun closer ties with the European Union and push his country toward Russia.

The World Boxing Council proclaimed Klitschko a "Champion Emeritus," a move that would allow him to challenge the new champion directly should he wish to resume his career." This offer makes it theoretically possible to return to the ring, which I cannot imagine at all happening as things stand now," Klitschko said in a statement. "I am now concentrating on the politics in Ukraine, I feel people need me there."

Klitschko is a lawmaker and chairman of the opposition party Udar (Punch) and intends to run for president in 2015. Yes, the door was left open for Vitali to return to the ring and maybe after jumping into politics with both feet, he may long to get punched in the face again, because the business of politics is the only business more corrupt and ruthless than boxing/contact sports. If you're looking for commentary on Klitschko's politics, sorry, not here. However, there's plenty to speak of regarding Vitali the former heavyweight title holder, who retires with a career record of 45-2 (41) with an 87% KO ratio, which is among the top three in heavyweight history. He's also the only heavyweight title-holder in history who has never been knocked of his feet during his career.

Who would've thought a decade ago before he really arrived on the scene that he would retire 10 years after fighting and losing to Lennox Lewis and would go on to compile hall of fame credentials?

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I remember being at the press conference in Atlantic City in June of 2002 for Wladimir Klitschko's final press conference before his fight with Ray Mercer. Wladimir was mobbed by writers and reporters while Vitali was standing in the back by himself with nobody paying him any mind. And when he was singled out, it was said that he was the less formidable fighter and his younger brother Wladimir was the future of the heavyweight division. Ironically, those remarks were made by the European writers who supposedly had the real down low on the Klitschko brothers. Amazingly those who covered the brothers most closely were so much off the mark and never grasped until years later that Vitali was the greater fighter and is the most accomplished heavyweight since Lennox Lewis retired after defeating Vitali in a life and death struggle back in June of 2003. When Vitali turned pro in 1996, he took a back seat to his younger brother Vitali in much the same manner Michael Spinks did to his older brother Leon, when the brothers made their pro-debut in 1977. And like Vitali, Michael ended up being the better and more accomplished fighter. Vitali blew through his opponents on the way up and was seldom met with much resistance until he fought the small and slick southpaw Chris Byrd. Vitali was controlling the fight until he injured his shoulder during the last third of the bout and retired after the ninth round. Despite his commanding lead, his heart and toughness was questioned by the media after the fight.

After losing to Byrd, Klitschko won five straight bouts and then challenged WBC title holder Lennox Lewis who was coming off of his eighth round knockout of former undisputed champion Mike Tyson.

Lewis didn't think much of Vitali as a fighter and showed up in terrible condition. Lennox paid for that mistake and was subjected to one of the toughest fights of his career. Luckily for Lewis that during the brawl he managed to cut Vitali over his left eye with a big right hand and the fight was stopped after the sixth round with Klitschko leading 58-56 on all three judges scorecards. The fight was sloppy and both fighters were spent after six rounds and it's a matter of speculation as to who would've won had the fight continued.

Lewis retired after fighting Vitali and has smartly avoided coming back. Lennox knew that if he continued after fighting Vitali, there was only one fight out there that made sense for him to take, a rematch with Klitschko. After thinking it over Lewis declined and left the division to Vitali and Wladimir to clean out, and they did. Only Vitali won 13 fights after fighting Lewis and never lost. He even took off four years and came back to reclaim a piece of the title at age 37. In fact he and George Foreman are the only two heavyweight title holders in history to defend a version of the title over the age of 40.

Those who have followed the heavyweight division during Vitali's era circa 2000/2013 know the

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names and history of the fighters he's faced on the way up and as a title holder. Yes, it was a very weak lot and you could make the case that the two best fighters on his record technically hold victories over him. However, he was winning both fights and was never punched around or man-handled by any fighter he ever faced, including Lewis. The negative on Vitali is, he was forced to fight and defend his title against a very pedestrian era of heavyweights. The fighters he faced who could punch, couldn't fight. The others couldn't fight or punch and the rest were journeyman who earned a title shot by compiling a few consecutive wins. There's no way around it, like Larry Holmes and many other heavyweight title holders, there weren't any outstanding or great challengers around to really test him.

Unlike Holmes, Vital Klitschko looked clumsy in the ring and was very awkward, something he used to his advantage during combat. The bottom line is the opposition he fought was very limited, but that's not his fault, he fought whoever was the most qualified to fight him and he dominated practically every time out. Actually, he seldom lost rounds let alone bouts. And as he leaves today he'd still be favored over every heavyweight in the world if they were to meet, even at age 42.

Here's the positive regarding Vitali the title-holder. At 6'7" and 250 plus, he was very big and physically strong. More importantly he knew how to use his size and strength in the ring. He was versatile and could circle and move if fighting an attacker like Corrie Sanders or Dereck Chisora. He could also press the fight against the fighters who moved away from him like Tomasz Adamek and Kevin Johnson and he also was a very effective counter-puncher. Vitali possessed great punch anticipation and was hard to hit. He had more than adequate stamina and if he hit you clean, he could get you out of there evidenced by his high knockout ratio. Vitali was a confident fighter and was not intimidated by any opponent he fought. Regardless of his opponent's style, he forced them to address his strengths and awkwardness before they could even attempt to try and fight their fight. No, he didn't always look polished and refined, but he was damned effective and was a thinking fighter in the ring. In fact he never made mistakes or beat himself once in 47 bouts.

Where does he rank in heavyweight history? It's too early to say for sure. What can be said is he must be considered amongst the top 15 heavyweight title holders in history based on what he brought to the ring as a fighter. Yes, I'd make him an underdog to Joe Louis, Sonny Liston, Muhammad Ali, George Foreman, Larry Holmes, Evander Holyfield and Lennox Lewis, but he would give them one of the toughest fights of their careers if so in a losing effort. As for the rest of the great champions and title holders, he's even money because of his size and style advantage against them head-to-head.

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Like Gene Tunney, Rocky Marciano and Lennox Lewis, Vitali Klitschko is getting out of boxing at the right time. He's leaving as the best fighter in the division as champ with his health, wealth and respect intact. That alone makes him unique. Frank Lotierzo can be contacted at GlovedFight@gmail.com

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brownsugar says:

Thats obviously where his passion lies...and at his age its the right choice... I wish him much success.

Radam G says:

Doc VK will return. Don't believe the jive of giving up da game for politricks. He will get tired of those d***s! Holla!

amayseng says:

Cant his boring arse brother retire instead?

At least Vitali had some killer instinct

Radam G says:

Rumor are circulating that the Cali Crusher C. Arreola and the 'Bama D. Wilder are dancing for WBC Emiritus Doc VK's alphabet-sanctioning organization regular-champion's title belt.

If the jive is truth, I'm going with Chris by KAYO in five. And that is no jive. Of course, Cris is going to have to be locked in camp and forced to eat correctly and train. Holla!

Shoulder Roll Defense says:

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Deontay Wilder out boxes Arreola and possibly stops him. Wilder has shown the potential and ability to be the next American heavyweight champion. On the other hand, Arreola is merely a trail horse. Stiverne boxed his ears off recently. Holla!

Radam G says:

Stiverne hit the lotto with breaking Chris's nose in the first round. The 'Bama Wilder will not be so lucky. He will probably turn down the offer to fight Chris. He doesn't wanna be exposed yet. Holla!

amayseng says:

I will go with Chris as well, unless he is stationed near a McDonalds...

Shoulder Roll Defense says:

[QUOTE=Radam G;41552]Stiverne hit the lotto with breaking Chris's nose in the first round. The 'Bama Wilder will not be so lucky. He will probably turn down the offer to fight Chris. He doesn't wanna be exposed yet. Holla![/QUOTE]

I don't see why you are so high on Chris and you are only telling part of the truth. Chris got his nose broken and was dropped pretty bad. He has no head movement and is made to order for the the jab/cross combination. Wilder hits a lot harder than Stiverne, or at least as hard as him. If Wilder uses his jab like he did last fight, he wins by KO or UD.

Radam G says:

If the bout happens, we shall see. Da 'Bama is no hamma.' He has fought from-the-graveyard softies and marshmallows. On a fighter with a heartbeat, dude cannot crack. Over fighting the boksing dead, he is no doubt da knocking-out MACK! That power against someone swinging back at him, he will lack. And down his long tall arse, they will hack.

Wilder is not a boksing-brick house, but an optical-illusion shack. He won't be able about to handle the Cali Crusher's buzz-saw attack. Hahaha! Holla!