

The Paul Williams Dilemma

Written by Frank Lotierzo

Thursday, 03 December 2009 18:00

Back in the mid-seventies future middleweight champ Marvin Hagler traveled to Joe Frazier's gym on Broad St. in North Philadelphia to train for his rubber match with Willie "The Worm" Monroe. Hagler and Monroe had split their first two bouts and the winner of the rubber match would move up close to the top of the middleweight food chain being that undisputed champ Carlos Monzon was about to announce his retirement from the ring.

While Hagler was training in Philly he was told by Joe Frazier that he had three strikes against him in regards to the fight game - 1) he was a southpaw 2) he was good and 3) he was black. Hagler went on to beat Monroe in their rubber match and then had to wait 25 months before he was given a shot at the middleweight title.

Today Paul Williams 37-1 (27) is a modern day version of Marvin Hagler. Like Hagler, despite being different stylistically, Williams is a southpaw, he's really good and he's black. On top of that he's 6'1" tall with a long reach. Williams throws punches in bunches and can fight just as effectively on the inside as he can from outside. Also like Hagler, he was outboxed and lost a fight early in his career only to come back and devastate his former conquer in a rematch.

As of this writing on the eve of his fight with Sergio Martinez 44-1-2 (24), Paul Williams is in an odd position being that there's really not a big fight out there for him. He tried to get WBC/WBO middleweight champ Kelly Pavlik into the ring but Pavlik pulled out due to him being afflicted with a staph infection on his hand. As a result of that the Williams-Martinez fight was made.

Martinez is a very good fighter. Quick, a beautifully conditioned lefty, clever, and a tough guy. The problem is that there's not one thing that he can do better than Williams. He gave Kermit Cintron a good going over in his last fight but got robbed when the bout was declared a draw.

Assuming that Williams does in fact get by Martinez Saturday night, who's out there that Williams can be matched up with who could stimulate substantial interest among the boxing public? The reality is that in order for Williams to partake in a big fight, he'll have to go up or down in weight significantly or he'll have to force a prospective opponent to do the same to make the fight.

Williams has stated that he'd love to meet the Pacquiao-Mayweather winner sometime in 2010. But is it likely that either one of them would get into the ring with Williams? He's just too big and versatile for either Pacquiao or Mayweather and that's assuming Paul could get down to welterweight which of course isn't a given by any means.

Perhaps if Shane Mosley beats Andre Berto in January Shane would be willing to fight Williams if the money was right and he can't land a fight with the Pacquiao-Mayweather winner. Then again Williams would be a tough match up for Mosley stylistically. And Mosley has already fought bigger fighters like the late Vernon Forrest and Winky Wright and suffered four of his five career defeats in those bouts. So unless the money is off the charts Mosley probably won't seek

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to make a fight with Williams.

Seeing Bernard Hopkins and Paul Williams in the ring facing each other would be intriguing. However, Hopkins is bigger and much more experienced than Williams and is capable of schooling Paul at this time in his career. As for Hopkins the risk-reward would be outta whack and the money wouldn't be worth the risk for Bernard.

Some have suggested Williams could take on the winner of the Super-Six tournament that just concluded its first round. But once again, with the exception of Arthur Abraham if he won it, Williams would be spotting size and weight against the other fighters participating in the tournament if they won.

Another fascinating match for Williams would be a bout with Chad Dawson, who along with Williams is considered one of the best up and coming young fighters in America. The problem is at what weight? How high can Williams go without being compromised and how low can Dawson get without him being weakened? In reality it would be another catch-weight bout and one of the two would be dramatically affected depending on the contracted weight. And with both Manny Pacquiao and Floyd Mayweather fighting in high profile catch-weight bouts in their last fight, we've had enough of those for the time being.

The truth is there's really not a compelling fight in the junior middleweight division that Williams currently campaigns in to seek out. So that leaves him hoping that Kelly Pavlik beats Miguel Espino in two weeks and a fight between them can be put together. And if that can't be worked out he could take two stay busy fights against Yuri Foreman to pick up the WBA title and Alfred Angulo, where HBO would pick up the tab.

Hopefully, the most avoided fighter in boxing will be seen in a high profile fight sometime in 2010. The sport of professional boxing will be greatly enriched the more Williams is exposed to boxing/sports fans.

Paul Williams really never takes easy fights. He's a real fighter, regardless of the outcomes of his fights.

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