

Pavlik Said He Wants Bute Next, That He Is Mentally Strong Ahead of Aug. 6 Clash...WOODS

Written by Michael Woods

Wednesday, 27 July 2011 15:54



Kelly Pavlik said he was looking forward to fighting on his home turf again on a Wednesday afternoon conference call to hype the Aug. 6th clash between the Youngstown resident and Darryl Cunningham, which will run on ShoBox.

Pavlik (37-2, 32 KOs) will headline a hometown fight card for the first time in nearly two years when he takes on Cunningham (23-2, 10 KOs), a 36 year-old fighter from Detroit. The fighter has had something of a love-hate relationship with his hometown, as he is the big ticket attraction in the region, and thus carries the hopes and dreams of the masses on his shoulders. "It gives you more motivation to go out and put on a good show," he said. As far as negatives, he said he didn't see any downside to fighting in front of his peeps.

I asked Kelly about the fracas with his brother Mike, which made the news two weeks ago. He said his head is screwed on straight, and he has shot down reports, stemming from the police report, which said he was drinking. "I'm doing great, there's nothing you can do about that stuff," said Pavlik, whose rehabs stints last year made the news. He said people get in shoving matches with their brother all the time but "I can't get in a shoving match with mine. It is what it is." He said he has been able to focus, to not let himself get distracted excessively as he makes

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sense of his habits and traits in the realm of substance use and abuse. "I'm focusing on Cunningham," he said. He said he has a mantra, of sorts: Who Cares, which keeps things in perspective. "I can't worry about pressure of the public, what people are going to say, I'm going to keep living my life, you can't and not be happy, and worry what everyone's gonna say." I told him I could only imagine what it's like to sort stuff like this out in public, and wished him well, as a human being.

He was asked if success came to him too early, and he considered the question. "Sometimes it was overwhelming, but it is what it is," he said. Yes, he said, there are some things he'd like to go back and change, same as every other person.

Pavlik was asked about Jermain Taylor's comeback, and said no, he sees no purpose in fighting Taylor again. And what about Sergio Martinez? Yes, he said, he'd like to fight Martinez again. (That fight would seemingly be hard to make, as Martinez' people have said they don't see him at 168, as his frame isn't large.)

Pavlik said this week will be his last hard week of work and thereafter he will be on cruise control. He said he has adjusted quite well to 168, calling making 160 "impossible" and said he will never go back to that class. This bout is contracted for 170 pounds or less, by the way. "Now we can focus more on boxing and the opponent than on how we'll lose weight," he said. The fighter was asked about his first fight at 168, against Patrick Lopez on the Pacquiao-Mosley undercard. He admitted he had a hard time with timing, and said he did get hit maybe more often than he was accustomed to because he was jittery.

He said he was never big on watching tapes, and focusing on himself, but he recognizes that at this critical stage of his career, it's a good idea to critique himself.

Pavlik said on tape, he saw Cunningham throw punches in bunches, but that he does back up when pressed. Is it a dangerous fight? Pavlik said every fight is dangerous if one looks past the opponent. Yes, the foe is 36, but he expects him to come in hungry. Trainer Jack Loew said it is an opportunity for Cunningham, and that they picked a lefty, because potential foe Lucian Bute is a southpaw. Loew said he has film on Bute, called him "the whole package," and that "his chin is questionable." "I don't think he's as talented as Martinez," Pavlik said, but did laud Bute as a total package. Pavlik said in that fight, fans will see a hungrier boxer, one who craves a crown. Pavlik said he would go to Canada to fight Bute if need be, as he's the champion.

Pavlik said he is looking forward to a Bute fight, and mentioned Carl Froch as another "big name" which attracts him. "I don't want to finish my career off fighting I hate to say it meaningless fights," he said. Against lefties in the past, Pavlik said in the amateurs he did well against them, and that he has "no problem" fighting southies. Sergio Martinez, of course, is a lefty, and Pavlik went 0-1 against him, and also beat Bronco McKart.

Top Rank's Todd deBouef spoke, and said he looks forward to having Pavlik stay busy, and get into more meaningful fights in the 168 pound class. He said he's hashing out details with Team Bute and Pavlik's manager Cameron Dunkin on when and where Pavlik will fight Bute. "The fall," he said, is the target time for that scrap. Canada would be the most likely venue for that

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