

Written by John Nguyen
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Khan weighed 139 pounds, while Peterson was 140 on Friday. Could the seasoned but heretofore unspectacular Peterson pull a massive upset in DC? Weigh in, in our Forum.

This Saturday night, Amir Khan will attempt to further cement his dominance at 140 pounds by taking on Lamont Peterson. The matchup will be the first major bout in years for fight-starved Washington D.C. boxing fans. With talented D.C. native Peterson trying to pull what would probably be the upset of the year against Khan, this has the makings for a potentially spirited affair.

Questions surround the fight. Will Khan, who has unsuccessfully tried to woo other top 140-pounders like Timothy Bradley, try to make a statement against Peterson? Will Peterson

finally be able to live up to the now-diminished hype that once surrounded him as a future champion? Answers should reveal themselves Saturday night, but a closer look at both fighters will paint a revealing picture of what's likely to go down.

Scouting Report for Lamont Peterson:

Lamont Peterson has been known by boxing insiders for the better part of a decade. Peterson, along with his brother Anthony, survived a harrowing childhood which saw them homeless and alone in Washington D.C. Trainer and father-figure Barry Hunter mentored both boys through boxing, saving them from being casualties of the harsh streets of D.C. Both young men showed promise in their amateur careers that created the buzz that they could possibly be future champions in the sport.

Unfortunately for Lamont Peterson, the step from world-class fighter to world champion has proven troublesome. Since being heralded as a future world champion as early as 2006, Peterson has plateaued in his progress as a fighter. When he has stepped up his competition level, he has proven disappointing, dropping a lopsided decision to Timothy Bradley in 2009 and fighting to an uninspired draw with Victor Ortiz in 2010.

From a technical standpoint, Peterson's lack of progress has stemmed from an inability or, perhaps more accurately, unwillingness to fight outside of his comfort zone. The ideal blueprint for Lamont Peterson is to fight at his own pace, boxing from range at a relaxed pace or choosing his spots infighting. Fundamentally, Peterson has the skills to do both quite competently, provided he can decide things on his own terms. His ideal opponent is one who will cooperate with this tempo of fight.

Against Bradley, and for extended portions of his fight with Ortiz, Peterson did not have a cooperative opponent in front of him. Bradley's awkward and unpredictable attack short-circuited Peterson's rhythm. While Peterson was able to fight back to good effect, the outcome was a wide-margin defeat, and the primary reason was that Bradley didn't allow Peterson to dictate the pace of the action. In the Ortiz fight, Peterson experienced the same difficulties when Ortiz was willing to mount an offensive. Only during the stretches when Ortiz was inactive was Peterson able establish his gameplan and set up his offense.

Peterson's career-best win was in his last fight against Victor Cayo. For much of the fight, Peterson was able to run the table and decide the terms of combat, which allowed him to stop Cayo late in an impressive outing for Peterson. The knockout of Cayo set up this title opportunity against Khan, but it didn't reveal a whole lot about Peterson. It simply showed, once again, that if he can control the tempo, Peterson is a very good fighter. Still, the mark of a championship-caliber fighter is to adapt to opponents and adjust when needed. This has been a marked weakness thus far in Peterson's career.

Another one of Peterson's liabilities is his habit of going almost completely defensive in the face of an opponent's assault. For a classic boxer, Peterson does not effectively utilize head movement to avoid punches. His favorite method is to hold his hands high and wait out the attack, similar to Winky Wright, but less effective. While Wright's high guard was as secure as Fort Knox, Peterson's cover-up defense can be penetrated with looping shots around his guard and split between with uppercuts that he has difficulty seeing. Also, unlike Wright, Peterson rarely punches out of this stance, waiting instead for his opponent to back up and allow him to reset his offense.

Peterson's other habit is to use a Mayweather-esque shoulder roll to evade punches, twisting and turning his torso, rolling away from punches, and sometimes leaning to his right and firing a right hand of his own. The problem, once again, is that Peterson does not utilize this technique as well as the man who perfected it. While Mayweather can twist and turn to avoid shots, he can also simultaneously use his legs to get himself out of precarious positions when needed. Peterson, though, keeps his feet fairly stationary. If his opponent doesn't fall for Peterson's flashy smoke and mirrors, he can continue to press Peterson by stepping around and continuing to throw punches. This puts Peterson off balance and allows his opponent to land effectively. Both Timothy Bradley and Victor Ortiz used this to their advantage against Peterson. The bottom line is that Peterson is not particularly hard to find, despite his reputation as a sound boxer.

In many ways, Lamont Peterson is like a classical pianist. With his sheet music in front of him and all of the variables under his control, he can put on quite a performance. However, if you take the same pianist and have him sit in with a jazz combo, the results are quite different. Having to play off his bandmates, having to improvise, and having to adjust to unpredictable circumstances requires a different skill set than what a classical pianist possesses.

In order to defeat Amir Khan, Peterson will need to draw from a different skill set than what he's demonstrated against top-flight opponents so far in his career. Whether he is capable of this is the question.

Scouting Report for Amir Khan:

Like Manny Pacquiao, Amir Khan's career will almost certainly be viewed in two parts: the pre-Roach era and the post-Roach era. The synergy that has resulted from Khan's pairing with the great Freddy Roach has been among the most dynamic in the sport. Since enlisting the help of Roach following his devastating knockout loss to Breidis Prescott, Khan has elevated his game to new heights and is now leading the charge of boxing's next generation.

The still-improving Khan has absorbed knowledge like a sponge under the tutelage of Roach. He now utilizes his imposing physical assets to their maximum while minimizing his deficiencies. Khan is growing increasingly proficient at maintaining proper distance with a long, snappy jab and a searing straight right. To his rangy size, Khan has added the assertiveness of greater physical strength, allowing him to push off his opponents to create distance or tie them up authoritatively when circumstances necessitate. All this allows Khan to get his potent offense rolling while avoiding contact with his notoriously malleable chin.

Khan has also become a master of feinting, which causes his opponents to react and stunts their offensive efforts. This was especially apparent in his last fight with Zab Judah, who was reacting to almost all of Khan's feints.

The way opponents now respond to Khan is not unlike the way opponents respond to Floyd Mayweather. Both fighters use speed, accuracy, and cleverness to make their opponents extremely reluctant to open up their attack. While Mayweather uses hair-trigger counterpunching, Khan uses his jab and deftly-timed feints to make his foes second-guess themselves.

Khan's defensive tactics may not be anything spectacular, but they are undoubtedly successful. He's not Pernell Whitaker, but the truth is that he doesn't need to be. By fighting tall, with hands held high, and at a proper distance, Khan avoids most of his opponent's punches with ease. He is also keenly aware that he is not an infighter, so wrapping up his opponents in close also minimizes damage. Khan is nothing if not honestly self-aware, so he knows how to stay away from his areas of liability.

This isn't to say that the Khan-Roach union has been completely smooth sailing. Khan's 2010 war with Marcos Maidana almost derailed the entire express train. After dropping Maidana in round one and dominating the early action, Khan was gradually worn down by Maidana's maniacal, relentless attack and found himself on the verge of being stopped late in the fight. It's a credit to Khan's fortitude and conditioning that he didn't cave in down the stretch, but the Maidana fight showed that Khan is still beatable given the right style matchup. Some view the close call with Maidana as Khan's crucible, a trial by fire that should erase doubts about his toughness or desire to be a fighter. Others, though, still doubt whether Khan's dented jaw will ultimately disqualify him from true greatness.

Khan's performances since the Maidana fight have been supremely dominant if not electrifying. In April, Khan dominated unheralded and outclassed prospect Paul McCloskey. In July, he pounded the faded Zab Judah. Against Lamont Peterson, Khan faces the most formidable foe since Maidana, but also faces a stylistic matchup that appears favorable to the pride of Bolton, England.

The biggest intangible that plays in Khan's favor is his desire to be great. His willingness to globe-trot with Freddy Roach, moving stateside from England, traveling to the Philippines to train with Manny Pacquiao, and having a humble, teachable attitude has been Khan's greatest asset. He is willing to pay the price to make a run at greatness, which, among young fighters, is a trait that is slowing going the way of the dodo bird. Some fighters dream of a big payday; some dream of being a world champion. Amir Khan has his sights set on far bigger things. Khan really believes that he is destined to become a legend. When a fighter sets his sights that high, is willing to pay his dues, and has the physical gifts to do it, it's a tough combination to beat.

The Bottom Line:

It is hard to see Peterson summoning what it takes against Khan. Peterson needs time to think and process to fight effectively, but he will have as much as his mind can handle dealing with what Khan will be throwing at him. Expect to see a lot of jabbing and feinting from Khan, and a lot of watching and waiting from Peterson, who will wait patiently for openings to land, only to find himself reticent to commit to a significant attack. Peterson hasn't shown a knack for being able to force the type of physically draining war that Maidana used to great effect against Khan. Also, Peterson's tendency to cuff and slap with his punches will make it difficult to put serious hurt on Khan. Without a healthy fear of Peterson's power, Khan will use his jab and right hand

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to pile up points while staying out of harm's way, just to be safe.

Stylistically, this doesn't have the look of a barn burner. It will be a matchup of two skilled boxers trying to outwit one another, but ultimately one boxer will prove far more skilled than the other.

The Result:

Amir Khan UD 12 Lamont Peterson, possibly by shutout.

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Radam G says:

What Lamont went through as a homeless child -- abandoned by his parents and sleeping in cars and cardboard boxes -- makes him LOVE in "da land where anybody can make it, if they [sic] just try!" And every homecooker and dey sidekick will be trying to find a way to give Lamont the bout just to continue this melodramatic jive about a Peterson's fairy-tale ending.

Great Khan might get a great ambushed bad decision in the city that is in no state. Besides often D.C. is for Dumba\$\$ Congress -- I mean Deception and Cheating. Holla!

MisterLee says:

My breakdown (fo's ho!) :

Khan:

Khan has extremely fast hands. They were on display against Marcos Maidana and also against Zab Judah. The opponents did not see the punches coming and he is able to mix up his punches enough so that they do not know where they're coming from. Also, in an interview Rashad Holloway (who is the chief sparring partner of Manny Pacquiao at the Wild Card Gym) said that he felt Amir Khan has faster hands than Pacquiao and Pacquiao had the faster feet. Amir Khan is tall for his weight, he has that long and fast jab, and he has a high volume. He also has power in both hands and is a lot more rugged than people have gave him credit for after the Prescott loss. His going 12 rounds with Maidana and daring Maidana to hit him on the ropes speaks to his heart and warrior mentality. Khan is tall, rangy, long, and fast as hell. He's a tough nut to crack for anyone.

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Peterson:

Peterson first jumped on the World scene in a Unanimous Decision against Timothy Bradley in the December of 2009. Bradley was on the rise and Peterson was hoping to meet him at this crossroads and take away his glory and his belts. Peterson lost a clear victory, and despite what people say about his "being game" in that fight, in all honesty I felt Peterson was visibly nervous and tentative in the fight. Also, he admitted to have thrown his game plan out the door when he was hurt by the right hands in the 1st and 2nd round, and Timothy Bradley beat him to the punch almost every time. Also, with every body shot Peterson landed Bradley returned 2 or 3. I did not score a close round at all for Peterson. To add, Peterson used to have 20-30 second lulls when he didn't throw punches at all and just seemed tentative at the elite level. However, then came the Victor Ortiz fight. Ortiz had his way with Peterson early and scored two knockdowns on him in a 10 round fight. A real gimme right? Then Ortiz had flashes of Maidana and ran away the rest of the fight. As that happened Peterson stepped up to the plate and battered and outboxed Ortiz the remaining rounds. Peterson sort of found his "voice" that fight and in the title shot eliminator against Victor Cayo he had his coming out party:

[url]<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKn0a5NgfxI&feature=related>

He was able to up his volume, up his aggression, his defense was in place, and he went HARD to the body and had thudding shots to the head (left hooks and overhand rights). Lamont's thudding power in my opinion is a testament to his work on the heavybag and the "punch shield:

[url]http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4o_xtGhbCS0 3:48 on the video.

What I truly liked was when Lamont gauged Cayo's timing, he was able to shoulder roll the punch and come back HARD with a right hook to the chest. His commitment to the body, his defense, and his increasing volume in fights as well as speed could smell upset against Amir Khan.

****IN ADDITION****

People still might cry "speed kills" in this matchup and that's the end all and be all of boxing. However, as we witnessed in the last Pacquiao fight: timing nullifies speed. Peterson is the more skilled boxer between the two and Peterson has fewer holes and weaknesses than Khan.

MisterLee says:

Great article Nguyen! Shows me the flip side of Peterson. still rooting for the hometown hero. Loved the article tho!