

Written by Ron Borges

Wednesday, 18 January 2012 20:43

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*Povetkin, here against Chris Byrd in 2007, improved a whole letter grade under Atlas. Now, it appears he has gone back on his word, and it's looking like a fruitful partnership has ended. (Hogan)*

## **EXCLUSIVE: Atlas and Povetkin Split..BORGES**

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According to his manager, Vladimir Khrunov, WBA heavyweight champion Alexander Povetkin is “expecting his mentor and coach Teddy Atlas to arrive in Moscow in the coming days” to begin preparations for a Feb. 25 title defense, according to a report in a Moscow newspaper. He’s going to have a long wait.

Khrunov knows that is not going to happen and Povetkin should know as well because when the marriage of the former Olympic gold medalist and Atlas began 2 ½ years ago the deal always was that Povetkin would train in the United States during those months when Atlas was working Friday Night Fights for ESPN.

Khrunov and Povetkin know it because they agreed to it, fully understanding Atlas could not put his full-time job as an analyst on the long-running ESPN2 boxing series at risk by going off to Russia for two months at a time in the midst of ESPN’s 40-fight broadcasting schedule.

Povetkin has, in the past, traveled to New Jersey to train but has never liked being in the United States for extended periods. Apparently now that he’s won the WBA title he and Khrunov have decided he no longer has to be a man of his word, something that is so often a part of the treacherous world of boxing that Atlas was reluctant to return to training fighters when this all began in July, 2009.

“I don’t know why Vlad is saying that (Atlas is on his way to Moscow),” a disappointed Atlas said. “He knows that’s impossible. Impossible! He knows the agreement we have.

“When ESPN is not broadcasting I go to Russia to train Sasha but when our broadcasting schedule starts the agreement is he comes here. I don’t know what they’re telling him but the fighter knows that.”

Povetkin was a becalmed heavyweight prospect going nowhere when Atlas agreed to train him. He was too heavy, too ponderous and seemed unsure of exactly what his style was. Atlas, who trained Michael Moorer to two heavyweight titles as well as Barry McGuigan, Donny LaLonde and Simon Brown among others, had refused to take over the career of Samuel Peter earlier that year when Peter refused to relocate his training from Las Vegas to New York. But after meeting with Povetkin and Khrunov he decided to return to training after a long absence...but only if Povetkin would come to the U.S. to prepare.

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He did and together they won six fights as Atlas deftly maneuvered Povetkin out of a bad match for short money against unified champion Wladimir Klitschko because he didn't feel he was yet ready to beat him. Few trainers would have opted to protect his fighter in that fashion because it would've cost them money but his position with Povetkin has always been simple.

"I didn't want him to fight for a title," Atlas said. "I wanted him to win the title and then defend it. The end game is Klitschko but when we took that fight I wanted him to be ready to win it and he needed more time. He's gotten better each fight. He has an identity now."

Although Atlas was widely criticized at the time, including by Povetkin's promoter Wilfried Sauerland, his plan was a sound one. He believed another title shot would materialize and it did, Povetkin winning the vacant WBA title last August by outpointing Ruslan Chagaev in one-sided fashion. He then successfully defended that title in December, stopping Cedric Boswell in eight rounds in Helsinki. That night it was suggested Povetkin face former cruiserweight champion Marco Huck, a popular German fighter, next.

"Can we do it tonight?" Atlas said that night. Now it appears Povetkin will be doing it without Atlas in his corner.

"There's nothing I can do," Atlas said. "They know that. It's very disappointing. I like the fighter but a man has to stand by his word. The agreement was that I would go to Russia to train him when Friday Night Fights was dark and he would come to New York to train when I was working. That was what we both agreed to and both sides know it.

"ESPN is my main job. I have an obligation to ESPN that I have to fulfill and I intend to fulfill it. Povetkin has an obligation too but I'm being told he doesn't want to come to the U.S. Who knows what they're actually telling him? That I don't know.

"All I know is I can't go to Russia. ESPN is how I feed my family. Vlad knows that. The fighter knows that. This kind of stuff is why I stopped training fighters. I'm so tired of this kind of thing. I don't understand why people in this sport can't keep their word."

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Now it is up to Alexander Povetkin (23-0, 17 KO) to decide if he still wants the man who turned him into a champion in his corner...and, more importantly, if he's a man who stands by his word.

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**ali says:**

I seen this split coming,...

**Radam G says:**

A lot of boxer-trainer relationships are like puppy love -- fades quickly. Holla!