Written by Frank Lotierzo
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Having just turned 40 this past July, WBC heavyweight title holder Vitali Klitschko 43-2 (40) probably won't be around too much longer, even if he does get past the almost 8-1 underdog Dereck Chisora 15-2 (9) tomorrow. Vitali has been prone to being injured during his career and as most know he has already run for political office. He was elected as a people's deputy to Kiev City Council and he's already announced that he will again run for mayor of Kiev.

As for his boxing career, there's not much left for Vitali, if anything, to prove as a fighter and champion. He's been a worthy title-holder/champion and is a little underrated by most historians, writers and fans. With the exception of his younger brother, Wladimir, he's fought every notable heavyweight of his era. He's only been defeated twice, once when his rotator cuff gave out during a title bout with Chris Byrd, a fight he was winning before he had to withdraw due to the injury. His last defeat came at the hands of Lennox Lewis three years later, who at the time was the universally recognized heavyweight champion. And just as it was the case with Chris Byrd, Vitali was ahead in that bout before it was stopped due to a terrible gash above and below his left eye, courtesy of several right hands landed by Lewis during the six rounds the fight lasted.

In fairness to Klitschko, he wasn't bettered by Byrd or Lewis in the ring, his body gave out. However, that comes with the territory and great fighters must be durable. And on at least two occasions, Vitali couldn't finish the fight. End of story. But don't misconstrue that thinking he

can't fight, because he's proven beyond all doubt that he can and would've been a handful in any era.

If for some unexpected reason Vitali decides to retire if he defeats Chisora, there's no disputing the fact that he's put together one helluva career body of work. He's never been down or trailed in one of his 45 professional bouts heading into his upcoming fight with Chisora. How many past heavyweight greats can say that? None.

Sure, many will scoff at that notion and point to the era in which he fought, but that wasn't something he had any control over. And if you take it a step further, it can be asked without hesitation if any of the past greats the likes of Jim Jeffries, Jack Johnson, Jack Dempsey, Joe Louis, Rocky Marciano, Sonny Liston, Mike Tyson and Larry Holmes defeated one single challenger during their title reign who would've been favored to beat Vitali? I know it's hard to compare eras, but at the least you'd have to admit Vitali is even money against any of the challengers those before mentioned greats made successful title defenses against.

Klitschko has tremendous size and strength standing 6' 7" and weighing around 250. He's a natural fighter who can box and punch. His defense and punch anticipation is greatly underrated and his chin, when he has been nailed, has never betrayed him. He has a very good jab and always seems to time if perfectly. Vitali isn't a one punch destroyer, but he hits plenty hard enough and has shown that he has more than enough power to break his opponent's will. He also knows how to use the ring and that with his natural aggression adds up to a very versatile heavyweight. Vitali is just as comfortable pushing the fight as he is stepping back or to the side while looking to set up a counter attack.

Forget about who he could or couldn't beat from the past. Vitali Klitschko has clearly been the best and most formidable heavyweight in professional boxing since Lennox Lewis retired and has won 10 consecutive WBC title bouts since 2004. Vitali has always sought to fight the most worthy fighters around who were qualified to fight him. He's always showed up in terrific shape and there's never been one fight that he participated in which boxing fans left with a bad taste in their mouths, which is different than not being entertained or overwhelmed by his performance and showing. Granted, he hasn't been the most exciting heavyweight you'll ever see, but sometimes dominance can be boring.

Vitali Klitschko certainly hasn't been the most aesthetically pleasing heavyweight to watch either. He's nowhere close to being one of the best boxers or punchers you'll ever see. He is

awkward and throws punches from unorthodox angles, but that's part of his effectiveness. Good fighters are often bothered by fighters who don't do things by the book. And that is part of the beauty and effectiveness of Vitali Klitschko.

The bottom line is he got the job done. It cannot be held against him that he doesn't look like a fundamentally sound fighter or action hero while in the ring. He doesn't dazzle anyone with flash and brilliance, and 16 years into his professional career he still hasn't thrown a single punch that anyone remembers. He just always wins and is seldom challenged during his bouts.

And that's what matters most and how all fighters should be judged.

Comment on this article

mortcola says:

Substance over style. Nice job, F-Lo. Now let the woulda-coulda fantasy naysayers say their nays.

Radam G says:

Doc Vitali K is the greatest heavyweight in his era of bums -- B-minus fighters -- tomato cans, stiffs, none-training fatties, can't-fight tallies and the list goes on.

Of course, Doc VK will go down as one of the most dominant heavies of all times. The chumps, skunks and zeroes in your eras have nothing to do with you. You just beat who's there. That is all that a fighter can do. But the woulda-coulda fantasy will live eternal. That is just the way humans roll.

If I woulda-coulda had about 10 more inches in height and 105 more pounds in weight, I woulda-coulda double fudged the K-bros/docs UP. Hehehehehehe! That is my woulda-coulda fantasy. And I'm slicking -- I meant sticking -- with it. [Super big, shiny-teeth GRIN!] Holla!

mortcola says:

Radam, if you ever have a fan club, I want to be your press secretary! Anyway, there's a certain justice in Chisora getting this fight - losing out on two chances against Wlad, beating Helenius but getting robbed. At the same time, the dude has few accomplishments and isn't gonna give Vitali more than a pleasant sweat.

TotoyBato says:

The Klitschko brothers are great heavyweight boxers.