

Paul Williams: Stylistically, He Can Be Corrected

Written by Frank Lotierzo
Friday, 17 February 2012 23:40



Let's take the style and fighting mindset of two of the most iconic fighters and champions in boxing history, Muhammad Ali and "Smokin" Joe Frazier. Even the most casual boxing fans around not only know of them, but also have an inkling on how they fought and what their ring strategy was. What made their three fights so drama filled and epic was that they were equally as tough and determined as each other and they possessed conflicting boxing styles. ☐☐

One's strength was the other's weakness and vice-versa.

☐ Ali was tall and wanted to wage combat from the outside. He had a long reach and wanted to use the entire ring circumference to control the pace and tempo of the exchanges. Joe was just under six feet tall and had short stubby arms. In order for Frazier to be effective, he needed to get inside and take away Ali's reach. Once Joe was inside he could nullify Ali's long range hitting and force him to trade hooks and uppercuts, advantage Frazier. However, in order for

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Joe to gain the upper-hand, he needed to cut the ring off on Ali and either force him into a corner or get his back to the ropes and then cut loose. Easier said than done.

□□□ The build and body structure of Muhammad and Joe had a lot to do with their style development and fighting mindset. In essence, Ali thought boxing entailed moving and using the ring and Joe believed boxing needed to be an inside war of attrition.....Now, try and imagine Muhammad and Joe switching styles and ring concepts. Think of Ali forging the fight on the inside against every opponent he fought and Frazier circling and using the ring as he jabbed on the fly against every opponent he fought. Had that been the case, Ernie Terrell would've taken them both apart every time.□□ Well I introduce you to junior middleweight Paul "The Punisher" Williams 40-2 (27). Williams stands a shade over 6' 1" and has an 80 inch reach. In other words he's a half inch shorter than one of the greatest light heavyweight champions in history, Michael Spinks, and has a two inch longer reach. He's also a southpaw who can punch and has good hand speed. Yet, regardless of who his opponent has been since he defeated former junior middleweight title holder Winky Wright in 2009, Williams gives away every one of his physical advantages when he fights...and as a result every bout is tougher than it needs to be and he gets hit more than he should while absorbing unnecessary punishment in the process. □□□ Williams is tall for any fighter campaigning in between welterweight and middleweight. He has long arms and should make every opponent he faces pay a price for trying to get near him or inside. The problem is, he thinks he can punch like former welterweight champion Thomas Hearns, but clearly doesn't. He has the mindset of Joe Frazier and thinks he must attack every fighter in front of him. And if that's not bad enough, he often lets his hands drop as he's moving in and is a sitting duck for overhand lefts and rights, which incidentally cost him during his rematch with Sergio Martinez in 2010 (Martinez knocked Williams out with an overhand left in the second round).

□□ Eight months after losing to Martinez, Williams won a gift decision over Erislandry Lara. Luckily for Paul, Lara isn't much of a puncher, because he was nailed repeatedly by overhand punches as he forced the fight. Tonight, he's fighting Nobuhiro Ishida 24-6-2 (9). Ishida is also 6' 1" and is coming off two first round knockouts. He's not fast, but he's never been stopped and based on the result of his last two bouts, he probably believes he's a genuine life-taker. Couple that with how Williams looked last July against Lara and Ishida probably doesn't see himself as the opponent in this fight. And if he has a morsel of early success, would anyone be shocked if Williams made the fight tougher than it has to be?

□□□ At this time Williams needs to reset and make some correctable adjustments stylistically if he wants to regain the junior middleweight or middleweight titles. When watching Paul work in the ring, it's obvious that he loves being inside throwing uppercuts and hooks. His problem is

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that he seldom if ever disguises them or sets them up, he leads with them. And to do that he must be close to his opponent and almost on top of them. And that's where he gets in trouble. By just walking in with his hands close to his body as he's looking to wing big looping shots, he gets hit cleanly by his opponent who can just reach out and nail him without moving his feet or facing any incoming jabs.

□□□ Martinez and Lara must've been in shock during their recent bouts with Williams. As they had to be thinking, "Man, if this guy uses his reach and forces me to navigate it just in order to get off, I'd be in trouble." But instead he allows shorter opponents to have an open causeway to nail him on the way in. And as long as he continues to not move his head or give them a different look, they can't miss the big target he presents.□□

"I feel like I always have to make a statement," the 30-year-old Williams said this week. "I feel like every time I get in the ring, I've got to make a statement." Sadly, that has to be construed as Paul thinking he needs a spectacular knockout to get back on track. This will give him the illusion that all he needs to do is focus in order to continue winning. And on that he would be mistaken. Williams needs to implement his height and range more into his game so he doesn't get hit as often and at the same time he would also score more cleanly because he'd be getting cleaner shots on fighters who have to address the physical gifts he was blessed with at birth. □ Someone needs to explain to Paul that you can actually hit an opponent harder who's coming to you than when you're pushing the fight. Joe Frazier and other swarmers had no choice but to push the fight. They were restricted by their height and short arms. Once inside Joe had the advantage, whereas Williams is at the disadvantage inside unless he picks his spots and creates openings instead of trying to blast his way in from bell-to-bell. □□ Paul Williams doesn't need to be completely made over stylistically. He's a tremendous fighter who loves to fight and mix it up, so there's no way any trainer should attempt to remove that part of his game from of his holster. What they need to do is refine him and induce him to work more with what he has. Why should he toss aside physical assets that many world class fighters would give up five years of their life to own?

□□□ Think about if you were a heavyweight contender today and were about to challenge title holder Wladimir Klitschko. Only, you knew during the fight you'd never have to address his height or reach, and you could reach and touch him without ever having to step towards him because he'll be right there in front of you. That would have to be a dream come true for any opponent of Wladimir. Well, that's the present Williams usually offers his opponents, resulting in his most recent bouts turning into herculean struggles.□□ It's amazing what Williams has accomplished as a fighter without much help. His natural talent and desire have been what's

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carried him. He's obviously loyal to his team almost to a fault and if he brought in an upper-tier trainer he'd be infinitely better within six months. ¶¶¶ In summary, Paul Williams needs to fight a little more scared and not look for a one-punch knockout with every shot he launches. He needs to make his opponents deal with his reach and cannot continue to offer his head on a silver platter for any contender he thinks he can just walk to as if they're handcuffed and then beat them down.

¶¶¶ These are correctable flaws for any fighter with the tools Williams possesses, but require extreme discipline on his part. Williams must grasp that he's not fighting to his optimum and be willing to do what's necessary to bring out the best in himself. Hopefully he isn't too set in his belief that his way is the only way, or that he's not physically damaged beyond repair. ¶¶

Which isn't a given.¶¶

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Radam G says:

Hum! This one piece of F-Lo got me brain twisted, so I'm reserving a comment, if any at a later date. But I don't agree with him about body structure having a lot to do with how a fighter style is formed. Not so! Especially by great trainers.

It is more of what a fighter can do, than what type of built or body structure that he has. I've seen tons of shorties -- myself and Willie Pep included -- who were boxing fools. And I've seen a lot of tallies, who were/are wrecking, slugging-like machines. Four tallies that quickly comes to mind are featherweight Sandy Saddler, lighthavies Bob Foster and Matthew Saud-Muhammad and heavyweight Roddick Bowe. Holla!

ali says:

If Paul Williams would let Emmanuel Stewart train him he woul fight like the Klits but throw a lot more punches he would be almost unbeatable.