

We Wonder..Did Povetkin Learn A Lesson?

Written by Ron Borges

Wednesday, 29 February 2012 20:59



Alexander Povetkin and the people who are trying to insulate him from the harsh realities of boxing were both given a dangerous lesson in the sport's difficulties Saturday night in Germany. Whether they learned anything or not only Povetkin can decide.

The 32-year-old former Olympic gold medalist was long an underachieving heavyweight pretender until he joined forces with trainer Teddy Atlas two years ago. Atlas transformed his once soft body into a boxer's and a once weak mind into a more strong willed one, although one that remained less than fully developed when the two came to a parting of the way a few months back over Povetkin's refusal to train in the United States, as per his contractual obligation, during the months when Atlas was working as an analyst for ESPN's Friday Night Fights.

Both refused to budge, Atlas unable to because it would have threatened his family's livelihood and the WBA champion unwilling to because he doesn't like spending protracted periods in the United States. Considering that he speaks little English and would be far from his home in Russia that's understandable but discomfort is the fighter's lot, especially for the ones who most want to win.

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It is a sport that demands much from all its practitioners and more from those who want to be world champion. In Povetkin's case, one of those discomforts was training from time to time in the United States. Frankly, on the discomfort meter that ranks somewhere between a bad pillow and cold soup.

Somewhere in the midst of being pummeled and nearly knocked out in the seventh round Saturday night by former cruiserweight champion Marco Huck, six weeks in New Jersey probably didn't look like such a bad alternative. If Povetkin is wise he will remember that.

Povetkin was saved by the bell and an alarmingly helpful referee named Luis Pabon and went on to be given (emphasis on the word "given") a majority decision on a night when the three men broadcasting the fight back in the U.S. all had the ex-cruiserweight champion in front and the crowd booed its disapproval when the decision went against the popular Huck (34-2, 25 KO).

"A lot of people who saw this fight see me as the winner," the 27-year-old Huck said and that included most everybody in the arena but those named Povetkin.

What was obvious as the fight wore on and Povetkin (24-0, 16 KO) wore out was that he still needs Atlas because if Atlas had been at his training camp the previous eight weeks he would not have entered the ring at the Porsche Arena looking like a little doughboy.

When the Huck fight was suggested only minutes after Povetkin's first successful title defense Atlas responded by saying they could do it that night if Huck would like. It was the kind of flippant remark he's known for but not one he would have made had he not felt his fighter was in a different class than Huck's.

But after one training camp under the guidance of Alexander Zimin, it was Povetkin who seemed out of his class. Physically he was dragging from the fight's midpoint, conditioning having always been a problem for him except for his few fights with Atlas.

Worse, he repeatedly was rocked by Huck, whose boxing style could only be described as crude. Had Pabon not repeatedly and incorrectly interceded when Huck was scoring on the inside, breaking up the fighters even as Huck was landing scoring blows, Povetkin might today be an ex-champion.

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What happened to him Saturday night was a cautionary warning to him, to his manager and to his promoters, Wilfried and Kallie Sauerland, of what is to come if they persist in warring with the one trainer who seems to have gotten the best out of Povetkin.

Atlas and the Sauerlands have been at odds ever since he blocked a title fight with Wladimir Klitschko that he rightly felt Povetkin was not yet ready for. Judging by the way he looked against Huck, the wisdom of that decision should be obvious.

Now the question is how wise is Povetkin and the people around him? If the fighter is smart or his handlers are truly looking out for his best interest they will do what they can to mend fences with Atlas and get Povetkin to the United States to train for his next fight, a defense against well-shot Hasim Rahman.

The problem with Rahman is that while he was never what some hoped he'd be after he upset Lennox Lewis and is no longer what he used to be, he still can knock you cold with the right hand, especially if he's facing a champion out of shape physically and weakened mentally.

Povetkin, not surprisingly, said after the fight he'd taken Huck lightly. Maybe he had. Certainly his decision not to come to the U.S. to continue his graduate school work with Atlas in the fine art of fisticuffs was a sign he either didn't realize how important it was to have a top trainer in his corner or forgot he hadn't done this all on his own.

No fighter does, just as no trainer can make a champion out of nothing. But what top trainers do is get the absolute most out of their fighter's abilities. Atlas had begun to do that. Zimin clearly did not.

So the question the WBA champion faces is simple: did he learn from this ill-advised mistake of returning to his old ways or is he intent on dooming himself to repeat their consequences?

That is up to him.

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alhmiel says:

Atlas isn't Angelo Dundee and is a okay trainer. Atlas never has had a great fighter. Povetkin is just a soft fat slow heavy not very skilled. looks lazy to me. Povetkin doesn't beat Aerrola or Chisora or adamek