Written by Blake Hochberger
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Prediction: Amir Khan will thoroughly dominate Lamont Peterson in their rematch on May 19.

If Amir Khan wants to take the next step into the ‘great’ or ‘elite’ territory of the welterweight ranks, he needs to win his rematch with Lamont Peterson in dominant fashion. And I think he will.

In short, Amir Khan is simply the superior fighter of the two. Peterson’s backstory is incredible and inspiring. As a prizefighter, he’s something short of great. His toughness and determination are his only discernable strengths as neither his speed nor his power are enough to win a fight against top competition.

Perhaps to a fault, Amir Khan is a crowd-pleasing fighter. His fights are never dull. He throws a good volume of punches and obliges any willing party in a slugfest. If you stand in front of Amir Khan, you're likely to have a really tough night. At 25, he's also entering the prime of his boxing years.

Khan and Peterson's first fight, on Dec. 10, was thrilling, if not marred by refereeing controversy. I think the referee did a pretty poor job throughout the fight, and any fight that has fans and writers both mentioning the ref in the first breath of a fight recap means the ref played too large of a role in the outcome. The two points taken from Amir Khan for pushing definitely impacted the scoring, but they weren't completely unwarranted. Amir Khan did push continually throughout the fight, and that's not legal according to the rules. That said, it was a ticky-tacky interpretation of the rule and a one-point deduction was certainly enough. Furthermore, the pushing was largely a bi-product of Lamont Peterson consistently leading with his head. In what proved to be the strategic move that won him the fight, Lamont Peterson led with his head and backed Amir Khan up all night. In some sense, it was really effective aggression (very influential in ringside scoring). Effectiveness aside, it directly led to most of the pushing. Amir Khan operates best in space, and he needed to create separation between himself and Peterson, so his natural reaction was to push him away. Technically, it was illegal; but it was a bad call to take points away for the minor infraction. Still, it wasn't the referee's fault that Amir Khan walked away without his hand raised.

This gets to my main point: Amir Khan should have made adjustments to control the distance and pace of the fight, and I'm confident he will do just that in their rematch.

Tactical issues that Khan should—and better--have resolved for this fight (and if he has, it will be a dominant victory):

1) Learn how to hold. Granted this, too, is technically illegal, Bernard Hopkins made a living late in his career by picking his shots, and then holding. It's not always fun to watch, but it's wildly effective. Especially when Khan gets hurt, he needs to learn to grab a hold of his opponent so they stop hitting him. He hasn't yet displayed this quality that veteran fighters adopt. Seeing Devon Alexander employ this strategy of landing hard, clean shots and then holding Marcos Maidana this past weekend was a perfect example to follow. While mildly underwhelming, it was an extremely decisive victory that put Alexander in line for a big fight in a lucrative division. Frankly, Alexander likely learned from watching Khan fail to contain Maidana in the later rounds in their Fight of the Year winning battle just a year ago.

** Side note: I think you'll know all you need to know about Khan from his Maidana fight. He's by far the superior fighter/boxer (and you get to see his strong body punching), but his willingness to engage and refusal to hold are paramount. Khan is fun to watch, offensively skilled, and extremely vulnerable to power punches. Oh, and he can bullied. Khan fights fire with fire, but if you're willing to take a few punches coming in, you can back him into the ropes and force him into a brawl. Despite being neither granite-chinned nor very difficult, Khan has no problem mixing it up in the pocket.

2) Become a better inside fighter/force an inside fight. If he stands his ground in the center of the ring and forces a war of attrition/uppercuts, he would dismantle Lamont Peterson. His body punching, speed and accuracy would overwhelm Peterson.

3) Get off the ropes. In addition to rolling some punches, Amir needs to learn to just get out of a bad situation. He doesn't exactly embody the term ring generalship, and frankly he does not look like he's being trained by the best trainer in the world (more to come on this below). He needs to circle away, land shots, and take the center of the ring again. He essentially needs to do what Miguel Cotto did in his rematch with Antonio Margarito (easier to do against a fighter as shot/slow as Margarito than a hungry Lamont Peterson). With Khan's pedigree, this should've been resolved years ago.

If he can make any one of those changes, he wins this fight easily. If he makes any 2+ of them, he'll win by a near shutout/KO. Lamont Peterson simply cannot compete with Amir Khan on even terms. The only way Peterson remains competitive is if Khan allows him to dictate the pace and location of the fight. This leads me to my next point… these are issues solved in the gym.

If Amir Khan would have consistently spun off of the ropes (which he did intermittently) rather than push off, this rematch never would have happened and Khan would be off to a fight bearing more financial significance. This also would not have been that close of a fight. Amir Khan (same as in the Maidana fight where he nearly was stopped) cannot get off the ropes when he's tired/hurt. He also does not know how to fight off the ropes. If you watch the classic Mayweather v. Jose Luis Castillo fight (the first one), you'll see what it looks like to effectively fight off of the ropes. It's something Floyd's done his whole career. Now, to be fair, Floyd is a gifted HOF-bound fighter that has skills Amir Khan could only dream of. BUT, when he needed

to, Floyd stuck his heels in the center of the ring and refused to be backed down by a far better fighter than Lamont Peterson. Khan either needs to learn how to fight on the ropes or control the pace/distance enough to not end up on them. This is where I question Freddie Roach. How is he not preparing his fighter with enough tools/tricks to stay off of the ropes when that one adjustment would clearly win him the fight?

From a personal standpoint, I think we'll learn a lot about Freddie Roach in this fight. If he still has what it takes to be a premier trainer, this fight won't be close. Roach seems to not give a ton of tactical advice to his fighters (which can be seen on "On Freddie Roach") in between rounds. He doesn't help them make adjustments anymore. I also think this was a major factor in the most recent Juan Manuel Marquez fight against Manny Pacquiao. Manny kept falling into the same traps throughout the fight, and Freddie was not telling him how to avoid them (lead uppercuts and/or a stronger conviction to a jab would have done the trick).

To be clear, I'm not questioning the merits of a deserving (and recently-elected) Hall of Famer in Freddie Roach. Surely, he turned a 122-lb Filipino fighter from a fireball that only had a 1-2 into one of the greatest offensive fighters of all time. But how much of that was the trainer and how much of that is due to the athlete? Well, I guess I am questioning the merits a little bit. All I'm saying is that he has the better horse in this Khan-Peterson rematch, and any one of a few tactical changes that he could implement in the gym should easily get his fighter a victory.

Amir Khan is yet to truly dominate a great opponent. Marco Antonio Barrera was well past his prime when they fought, and as much as I like Paulie Malignaggi, he epitomizes the term 'gatekeeper'. If you can't beat him convincingly, you're not destined to be a world beater. Peterson isn't that great opponent, but in order to get his chance at beating a top tier fighter and avoid being looped into that 'good, but not great' category, Khan needs to have one hell of a night in this rematch. Again, I think he will.

This fight has more significance to the state of boxing than one would think. This 140-154-lb weight classes have been among the most exciting/best divisions in boxing for the last decade. If Manny takes care of his business against Timothy Bradley (no guarantee, mind you) and Floyd turns Cotto into a gatekeeper, what's left in these weight classes? The re-emerging Devon Alexander? Not exactly a must-buy PPV name.

If Amir Khan can make the slight aforementioned adjustments to his game, he will win and look good doing so. If he's able to do that, he can position himself for countless big fights in this

division. If not, let's hope Canelo is as good as advertised (he's not yet a world-class fighter), because he'll be one of the few shining stars left in these ranks.

Comment on this article

Larry Merchant says:

At first I didn't think you knew sh*t about boxing, but boy was I wrong. Fantastic writeup!

-LM

Radam G says:

Amir "Da Great" Khan will [or should] kick the outta Peterson in Sin City. The referee there will have no pity. And it is a big distinction between holding and clinching.

BTW, B-Hop is a master at knowing that distinction. Trust me, or not, he is a great clincher -- one of the lost trades of the game -- not a holder. I just wish that the powers that be would define the difference between a clinch and a hold. Without the art of clinching, GOAT Ali woulda and coulda lost half of his bouts. Sugar Ray Robinson woulda lost quite a bit of his bouts too. And Jack Johnson would never been the first black heavyweight champion of the world without clinching. Gene Tunney would have survived that long count against Jack Dempsey without running like a bytch and clinching like a blood-sucking leech.

Shame! Shame! Shame! Nowadays every form of clinching is labeled as holding. And the defensive art of two-handed straight maneuvering of your opponent to get him off you or to not the holy sh*t outta him is now labeled as pushing.

Jack Johnson, Henry Armstrong, Benny Leonard, Sugar Ray Robinson, Archie 'The old Mongoose," Moore, GOAT Ali, Bob Foster, George Foreman and Larry Holmes would not be jack jive nowadays, because they should were what is now knowing as "pushing." And "holding" too.

Oh, YUP! The films don't lie. And the game ain't what it use to be. Why don't these New Jack officials -- a bunch of know nothing _____ _____ go and mess with volley ball or swimming or track and field or sumptin' [sic]!

Hopefully, in fight II of Khan-Peterson, Da Great Khan will not try to be "the cleaner fighter." When Peterson start running in with that dome bent in Amir's face, Da Great Khan needs to pull a Tim Bradley and bust Peterson right up in the crown of the dome and on the back of the neck. This is all legal tricks of the trade when a muthasucka is intent on fouling you by his dome-to-the-face trick of the trade.

KaBOOM! KaZUNK! POW, POW, POW straight to the crown! Amir better go ahead and knock

the wooly outta Peterson's bush. And that way Da Great won't need to "PUSH!"

Later for referee Joe Cooper! He was just one sorry-arse for-the-homeboy-title-belt looter. Holla!

Riggo44 says:

You cherry-pick your points and repeatedly fall back on Khan is the better fighter. I agree but you could have just as easily said he needs to work the body more or develop a wear-down defense as any of the aspects you claim. Khan will win and we'll all look smart.

"B" says:

Khan will be favoured to win and if I was a betting man I would take him all day. But Lamont is one of my friends so I will definitely be routing for him. Amir has the physical tools in my opinion to beat anyone from 140 to 147 but does not have the skills....yet anyways. He has a amatuer style. He wants to hit you and scurry away before he really has to mix it up. Not to say his style is not affective but he lacks authority in the ring. His style works for usually the first 3 quarters of any fight because he is blessed with amazing legs and fast hands. But when He fatigues and a his apponent is still standing....well you guys have seen his fights.....he breaks down. If he stays away from Lamont and keeps making him reset and keeps turning him he will win easy. But if he gets hurt or caught with a few good body shots I could see him abandoning the gameplan and then who knows I just don't think he will ever hold up when a boxing match becomes a fight. Some guys can get grimey and some can't .....be blessed tss nation

DaveB says:

That is one of the best posts I've seen on here. It is succinct, a good observation, and makes the point on its on merit. It kind of reminds me of how Abe Lincoln wrote his speeches. Good job.

brownsugar says:

agreed,... awesome post B,..... the first fight could have gone either way,.. the second will be about who will make the better adjustments and who has the better ring IQ and adaptability. that goes for the trainers and coaches. ...the best this is,... both side feel equally confident. I lean a little towards Khan, but I'm hoping Peterson can surprise me.

"B" says:

Thanks guys. Lamont is world class but he just seems to lack that extra gear or that sixth sense as some call it when to "suck it up" and pick up the pace. He has a great opportunity in this rematch to change his legacy in boxing's history books.

gibola says:

Wlad and Khan - to learn how to fight inside or to not learn how to fight inside?
If Khan can have the ref from last night's Wlad-Mormeck fight Peterson won't win a round or a minute of a round and will be outboxed at range and tied up in close. If Khan is allowed to grab as much as he liked his lack of inside game won't be an issue. If Peterson is allowed by the ref to rough Khan up again it's still a tough fight for Khan. Khan needs to learn to fight inside to become a more complete fighter and because he is not allowed to hold people excessively, he risks losing points or being DQ'd. Wlad doesn't need to learn to fight inside, doesn't need to become a complete fighter because he can wrestle all night long in German prize rings without the threat of losing points or being DQ'd. He can throw a Mormeck or Haye to the floor (as he did) and land his 17stone on them WWF style and the ref will smile and say 'box on'.
Khan must learn to fight inside, Wlad doesn't need to. Such is boxing in 2011.

Wybaldwi says:

I dont think Khan dominates, but I do think he will win. Lamont isn't a great fighter, but hes not a fighter that Khan will be able to beat convincingly. I think it will be closer to a majority/split decision than a near shutuout/knockout.