Earlier this month, The Sweet Science posted the results of a poll that asked the question, “What would happen if the best thirteen middleweights in the world fought a round-robin tournament against one another? Ten matchmakers and three expert analysts participated in the deliberations. When the polling was done, 1,014 fight predictions were entered into the data base.

As expected, Sergio Martinez finished first. Two other middleweights separated themselves from the rest of the field. One of them (the second-place finisher) was Gennady Golovkin.

Golovkin had more than three hundred amateur fights in his native Kazakhstan and lost only a

handful. He says that he has never been knocked down as an amateur or pro and is willing to fight at any weight from 154 to 168 pounds. He won a silver medal at the 2004 Olympics and a World Amateur Boxing Championship the year before. His victims in the amateur ranks included Andre Dirrell, Lucian Bute, Andy Lee, Daniel Geale, and Matt Korobov.

Gennady now lives in Germany and has compiled a professional record of 22-and-0 with 19 knockouts. In the convoluted world of professional boxing, he is one of several WBA middleweight champions.

It's unclear how good Golovkin is, or might become, because his record is devoid of world-class opponents. But the manner in which he has performed to date has given rise to great expectations.

Abel Sanchez (Golovkin's trainer) says, "Gennady is very patient. He's like a sniper. He waits for the right moment to go for the kill; and when it comes, he's deadly. I've been around a lot of fighters who were motivated by anger. Gennady is motivated by the pursuit of excellence. He's the whole package. Power, patience, conditioning, a cerebral approach. Fighters call out other fighters all the time. But you don't hear anyone saying 'I want Golovkin.'"

Gennady has a soft voice, easy-going manner, and warm welcoming smile. He looks younger than his thirty years and speaks with a rapid cadence. Among the thoughts he offered in a recent interview were:

* "My father was a coal miner. My mother worked as an assistant in a chemical laboratory. I have a twin brother named Max. We started boxing when I was ten. Almost always, we were in the same weight division. Max was technically better than I was. I was more aggressive and the harder puncher. We decided from the beginning that we would never fight each other. Three times, we were in the finals of the same important tournament; and each time, one of us stepped aside. At the 2004 Olympic trials, Max stepped aside so I could go to the Olympics. After that, I took the risk to leave Kazakhstan and turn professional. Max stayed in Kazakhstan to take care of our parents and look after my financial interests."

* "I was nine years old when the Soviet Union disintegrated and Kazakhstan became an independent country. It was depressing at first. The economic and social condition of the

country went into crisis. We lacked things that people take for granted and lived our lives within a limited framework. There was a lot of worry about what would happen next. We didn't know what the future would hold. Now things are better. There is more for the people to enjoy and life is good."

* "The best thing about being a fighter is taking everything I've learned and applying it to real life. In the ring, that is hard. You can't always do what you want to do. I know that perfection will never come to me as a boxer, but I keep striving to achieve it."

* "Courage is the responsibility of every boxer. When a boxer is in the ring, he cannot feel fear. But I don't think that being a boxer requires cruelty. For me, boxing is a sport. It isn't about cruelty. Does a soldier have to be cruel to do his job?"

* "Sergio Martinez is a very good boxer. Right now, he deserves to be called the middleweight champion of the world. I think I am better, but I do not know that for sure. I would like to fight him to find out."

Last week, Golovkin came to New York to attend the championship bout between Martinez and Matthew Macklin. On his first night in the Big Apple, he went to a restaurant, where the doorman looked at him and asked, "Do you remember me?"

"No," Golovkin answered honestly.

"Well, my chin remembers you very well."

Gennady looked more closely. Then the two men embraced.

The doorman was Ramadan Nasser, who Golovkin defeated in the second round of the 2004 Olympics.

“He is from Egypt,” Gennady said afterward. “Now he lives in New York. The restaurant is his sponsor. He is part-owner of a gym and is a professional fighter [with a 7-and-0 record]. We never know what life holds for us. But so far, that is not a bad result.”

Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thauser@rcn.com. His most recent book (*Winks and Daggers: An Inside Look at Another Year in Boxing*
) was published by the University of Arkansas Press.

Comment on this article

deepwater says:

goog luck gg.a nice breath of fresh air.he probably could beat andy lee right now.andy lee and manny steward are looking for the easiest road the the champsionship, he lacks tough fights on his resume. maybe he should talk to people about the dangers of communism since he lived through it and this country is on the verge of it.

brownsugar says:

Golovkins management did reach out to Martinez's camp as early as a year ago, (along with Williams other conquerer, Arislandi Lara in hopes of setting up a fight with Martinez). but it comes as no surprises that Camp Martinez chose not to fight citing Golovkins' relative lack of "marquis" value,...while choosing to fight the infinitely illuminary and more popular household names of Barkley and Macklin instead.

Golovkin had a fight set up with Pirog that fell thru some little discussed reason.....also fringe world champ, N'Dam N'Jikam also found a way to escape an engagement with Golovkin. Chavez Jr won't even speak his name.....He' willing to fight everybody. anybody. and the better the competition the better he fights.

Boxing fans at large know little to nothing about Golovkin, but I'd be willing to bet that the entire hoard of middleweight champs have a secret file about Golovkin hidden way for safe keeping.

congrats to the TSS for giving the kid a little exposure, he deserves it.

Rantcatrat says:

Peter Quillin versus Gennady Golovkin is a great fight for both.

CPX says:

The hype around this guy is huge, cannot wait to see him against TOP opposition! Although he looks a wee bit small for 168?

ultimoshogun says:

Thats quite the list of conquests he compiled as an amateur. Hey Sug, you seem to be the go to guy when it comes to Golovkin and Pirog. I've only watched Pirog twice and was pretty impressed, but I haven't any of Golovkin's so i'll ask you...In your opinion does Golovkin have as much upside as Pirog...how do you think their fight woulda played out had it not fallen through?

the Roast says:

Ahh, Kazakhstan. That means he sounds like Borat. This alone will make me root for him. Pirog has not cashed in on that KO of Danny Jacobs. He's only fought once or twice since. Not a good plan. We got a full slate this weekend. Friday night FNF and ShoBox, Saturday night NBCsportsnet and HBO. I think my boy Molina has a good chance to beat Kirkland. I'll be back in Chicago April 14th for the Golden Gloves finals. We will celebrate Molina's win Chicago style! Support your local amatuers people!

brownsugar says:

Ultimo I like both but Golovkin has more juice outside the ring while Pirogs fights are set up with all the finess of a BackYard Underground Wrestling match. Inside the ring I see it even steven. But Pirog is in danger of rotting on the while GG's outlook has way more upswing.

brownsugar says:

Rotting on the vine