Perhaps it is fitting that former middleweight champion Kelly “The Ghost” Pavlik (37-2, 32 KOs) is set to make what could be his last stand in San Antonio, Texas. The city is known for such things.

In 1836, at a mission-turned-fortress called the Alamo, approximately 180 Texans held off more than 1,500 Mexican troops for 13 days before succumbing to defeat. The Mexican army left no prisoners, and to this day legends of ghostly apparitions and frightful poltergeists are recounted by campfire and candlelight.

Unlike the souls laid to rest by the savagery of war, Kelly Pavlik isn't fighting for his life, but he is fighting for his way of life.

Boxing has, by and large, been good to Pavlik.

The heavy-handed, exciting fighter from Youngstown, Ohio had built a name for himself in the old-fashioned way. He wasn't some athletic phenom dazzling folks with sheer, God-given ability. Nor was he the Olympic hero returning with the golden and glorious spoils of his international pursuits.

No, Kelly Pavlik was the rough and tough sonuvabitch who climbed his way up the middleweight ladder the hard way with fierce and exciting wins over fringe contenders on non-televised undercards and Spanish language television bouts. Pavlik earned a shot at the middleweight crown by slugging it out with Edison Miranda for a TKO 7 win in a 2007 elimination bout, then followed it up by picking himself up off the canvas in the second round against Jermain Taylor to stop the champ in the 7th round.

The 25-year-old was on top of the world, and just for good measure, he outpointed Taylor in the rematch a few months later to solidify himself as the best middleweight in the world and one of the biggest rising stars in the sport.

And that's when it started falling apart.

Pavlik dispatched UK import Gary Lockett easy enough, but then signed up for a 170 pound catchweight bout against former middleweight kingpin Bernard Hopkins, whose age and slow

style were the perfect recipe for a career milestone win.

It was an absolute disaster. Hopkins virtually blanked Pavlik, taking home a wide unanimous decision victory.

Pavlik picked up two more wins as middleweight champ before losing to Sergio Martinez in 2010 in a fight where Pavlik's middle round successes were bookended by a speedier Martinez.

His struggles would continue, and accelerate. "The Ghost" had become just that—a ghost of himself. He struggled with alcohol addiction and ended up checking himself into the Betty Ford clinic, not once, but twice. He fired long-time trainer Jack Loew and was in and out of the news for his erratic behavior.

In a shrewd move by his promoters, Pavlik faced the hopelessly outclassed Alfonso Lopez for the first bout in his move up to the super middleweight division, but he struggled even at that, winning only by majority decision.

The luster was gone, and Kelly Pavlik was right back where he started.

It has been just under a year since his last fight. Pavlik has now hired a new trainer, Robert Garcia, and he reportedly feels he has a new lease on life. Top Rank has him buried--just in case he's more rusty than he'd like, or maybe to keep some pressure off his back--on the undercard of a Spanish language television card, and his opponent, 35-year-old journeyman Aaron Jaco (15-2, 5 KOs), is the kind of fighter Pavlik should have no trouble dispatching.

"Kelly has been working very hard at his training camp…and hopefully this will be the beginning of his re-emergence into boxing at the top level," said Top Rank's head honcho, Bob Arum, through a recent press release.

"Kelly is ready. He is strong and he wants to get back into the ring to compete," added Robert

Garcia.

Pavlik's team seems positive and upbeat, and why shouldn't they be? The two losses tallied on the former champion's impressive ledger have come against the very best of the best, and he seems to, for now, have put his problems outside the ring behind him for good.

"I have a little more bounce in my step, been working on my hand speed and my combinations and sparring some very good fighters," Pavlik told hometown newspaper The Vindicator. "It's starting to come."

But like all good ghost stories, mystery remains. Is it too little, too late? Have Kelly Pavlik's demons overcome him, or will "The Ghost" return to form?

Comment on this article

Radam G says:

Some may call it a land stand, but I'm willing to bet that super trainer Robert Garcia will get Kelly Pavlik on that life machine. That's RIGHT! Unplug that sucka, because "The Ghost" will live another day to spook all comers. The game is a team sport. And sometimes, you just need to change the head dawg -- the coach/trainer. Holla!

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deepwater says:

lol. buddy"were stopping it baby" mcgirt. hope pavlik can turn his life around or he can be a drunk ;punching out lamp posts because its pretty funny. doesnt matter to me. dear sweet science, please stop hyping chris algeri(ex=Algieri in Spotlight Saturday on Long Island) algeri should be ashamed of himself. he lost his last fight big time but surprise surprise he got the win and acted like a clown after. youtube it. he is now fighting yet another can and pretending its a world champ. keep it real. keep fighting cans but dont you dare brag about it.

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suzan classen says:

I am really glad he has this second chance. I believe in him...watched him come up and not the easy way or anyone's strings. He is a great fighter and now he has a new trainer which is a new set of eyes on him and he will take this fight and move back on up..for all the people who do not believe in him he does not need any negativity in his camp and you are not needed. Go follow Chavez Jr.!

Buzz Murdock says:

time waits for no one

ultimoshogun says:

I've always liked Pavlik, the person and the fighter. Hope he can keep his personal demons at bay so he and Robert Garcia can resurrect his career.

ali says:

McGirt is like a stop sign hidden in the bushes that u don't see until the last second WTF!!!! HILARIOUS SH*T TRIPLE O.G...LMAO!!!!