

LOTIERZO'S LOWDOWN Khan Must Check His Ego, Learn To Clinch

Written by Frank Lotierzo
Monday, 16 July 2012 09:18



Clinching and tying an opponent up when hurt is not a form of surrender or viewed as weakness. At least not by those who know boxing or have been in the ring.

This past weekend former junior welterweight title holder Amir Khan 26-3 (18) was stopped in the fourth round by Danny Garcia 24-0 (15). This was the second time Khan has been stopped, yet he's been hurt multiple times throughout his career by a single punch and looked as if he

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were a punch away from being stopped.

It's obvious that when watching Khan on the attack, he's a great offensive fighter who can throw every punch with speed, accuracy and power. But his chin liability is a problem and looks as though it may derail his career. His mechanics of reverting to being too upright with his head held high leaves him open to getting nailed with counters can be corrected with a lot of work.

Then again, it's foolish to think that his trainer Freddie Roach doesn't see this and at least attempts to correct it in the gym. But doing it in the gym is a lifetime different than doing it in the heat of battle on fight night in front of a few million fans watching live and on television. Also, along with that Khan needs to improve his inside game so he doesn't get nailed with tail end punches between flurries as he's stepping away.

For the next few weeks we'll be fed articles that detail everything that Khan should do and the style adjustments he needs to make in order to continue on as a world class championship caliber fighter/boxer. And I'll cede that stylistically there are some things he can do in order to not get nailed so cleanly and getting hurt, only to rush in again and repeat the same sequence of tactical errors. But getting hit is something that can't be prevented. So he needs to learn what he must attempt to do in order to extend the fight the next time he's hurt and in trouble.

That said, what'll be overlooked is what apparently seems to be the biggest issue -- and that's Khan's mindset of seeing clinching and holding as a form of surrendering. Any knowledgeable fan understands that's not the case at all.

Former six division champ Thomas Hearn was a destroyer who could box and punch. He had speed, two handed power, could box from out side and also bring it as the aggressor behind his piston like left jab. He had the heart of a wounded lion and fought everybody between 147-175. However, he could be hurt and shook pretty good by one punch. Granted, he never completely mastered clinching and smothering his opponent when he needed time to recover. But he at least checked his ego and tried it.

Hearn saw clinching as a tactic and a means of survival in order to extend the fight so he could continue on and eventually win. No doubt that clinching and holding carried him through his fight against James Kinchen and his rematch with Sugar Ray Leonard. Obviously Amir Khan is not in

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the same stratosphere as Thomas Hearns as a fighter, but he can learn from him if he's willing to check his ego.

Someone close to Amir Khan has to instill in him that all fighters have strengths and vulnerabilities. He must realize that clinching and tying up his opponent when he's hurt or in trouble is a strategy and a tactic, not a sign of weakness. For two and half rounds he was taking Danny Garcia apart. Garcia was cut and looked as if he was on the verge of perhaps stepping off and not engaging Khan so much. Only he's a super-tough and gritty guy who figured that his only chance was to make the fight a test of toughness and durability more so than skills, something that probably had a lot to do with his father/trainers' comments about Khan before the fight with the hopes of making him fight more recklessly than he normally would.

See, there again is an example of Khan's gumption and willingness, how those traits are to his detriment. So what happened? He dominates until he gets caught with a counter left hook that Garcia threw out of desperation just trying to stand his ground and halt Khan's assault. He gets hurt and goes down. He makes it through the round but in the next round he's willing to go right back at Garcia and tries to show him that the fight is not over and now he's gonna put Garcia away. Instead of making Garcia work for the stoppage, Khan obliges him and slugs it out on the inside while he's still shook. Well it just so happens that inside is where Garcia can make his living and soon Khan is dropped again and stopped.

For a brief time it looked as if maybe Khan could make it out of the fourth round, that Garcia may have punched himself out and the fight would've come down to a skills contest. No, we'll never know but if Khan gets out of the fourth round and boxes Garcia, he may have pulled the fight out.

If Amir Khan wants to continue on and be a factor in the 140-147 divisions, the first thing he must do is accept that clinching and tying up an opponent when hurt doesn't signify ones weakness. It's a tactic and strategy. It would be a major overhaul to reform Khan and there's no guarantee that it would be completely successful for him. However, it's his only option if he wants to try and hang around a little longer and again perhaps be a top contender, because if he continues to fight, regardless of who trains him or whatever style adjustments/corrections he makes, he's going to get nailed real hard again.

No one but Khan can prevent himself from repeating the same mistakes over again that keep him from regrouping after he's hurt badly and in trouble.

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Other fighters greater than Amir Khan went onto become HOFers and all-time greats using the tactic and strategy of clinching and tying up their opponent when they were hurt or in trouble.

Frank Lotierzo can be contacted at GlovedFist@Gmail.com

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dino da vinci says:

Frank, I love everything about this kid, and I feel he would have been a tremendous role model for the sport.

However...

Some guys take a better shot than others, but I have a bad feeling that he makes Terry Norris look like Jake LaMotta. Norris, had he had a better chin, would have been a legendary fighter. Both Khan and Norris are/were always in great shape and want(ed) to fight the best. The only difference was that I'd see Norris get cracked from time to time and weather the shot relatively well. Both in a fight and while sparring. With Khan however, I'm very concerned that the same genetics that blessed him in so many ways have severely shortchanged him in the one that matters, if not most, then certainly a great deal. This punch that toppled him wasn't in the same league as the one Donaire landed on Montiel.

He appears to be a great kid with a champion's heart. Ahh, well...

Matthew says:

Some fighters just do not have the survival instincts necessary to get them through moments when they are knocked down or hurt. While clinching is certainly a skill that can be learned, it's a completely different thing to be able to apply that skill when the bullets are flying, so to speak. To be able to do this when your head is ringing and your thinking is foggy is almost instinctive; some fighters can do it and other fighters cannot. Ray Leonard and Thomas Hearn are polarizing examples of this. Larry Merchant once said "Keep in mind that when he is hurt, Sugar Ray Leonard is at his most dangerous." Leonard was able to keep his head think things through when he was hurt, as he displayed in the 9th round against Donny Lalonde. Merchant also said (and I'm paraphrasing) "When Hearn has been hurt, he has stayed hurt." Unfortunately for Hearn, he didn't learn how to clinch until later in his career. Had he learned it earlier, the outcomes of his fights against Leonard and Hagler might have been different.

deepwater says:

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Learn to clinch? This guy has been to Olympics and is world champ. If he didn't learn to clinch up until now forgettaboutit . I was sparring and got clipped. It didn't hurt but me legs wouldn't move for about 10 seconds. The thing is sometimes when you get cracked you have no control. I blame roach for this as much as khan. Khan coulda had a shutout win if he just boxed . He was mad and let the emotion get to him. Either way I don't think khan should learn anymore about boxing. He should retire.

Radam G says:

Clinching is a beautiful thing, and has saved many an A\$\$ES. Holla!

ali says:

Matthew & Dino y'all said everything I wanted to say damn good post fellas.

dino da vinci says:

[QUOTE=ali;18469]Matthew & Dino y'all said everything I wanted to say damn good post fellas.[/QUOTE]

Thanks Ali. It's true though. If this kid has been born with a glass head, no trainer, exercise, jumping weight divisions, changing his diet, etc. is going to change the outcome of his future. I saw a clip on youtube where he was asked what he hoped to get out of his career, and he gave the perfect answer. He wished to go on and become an all-time great. That's the right answer. I wish all fighters felt that way. Most fighters think they're clever and find little ways to cheat. One day it's not doing the roadwork, another day a few less rounds on the bag. Fake injuries. The list goes on and on. This kid, Khan, never cheated himself or the viewing public. His (ability to take a punch to the) head has betrayed him, and it just goes to show you what a tough sport this truly is.

Buzz Murdock says:

I think Amir Khan should retire. His vulnerabilities are compelling. The constant comparison to Terry Norris is ominous for obvious reasons.

Grimm says:

[QUOTE=Buzz Murdock;18478]The constant comparison to Terry Norris is ominous for obvious reasons.[/QUOTE]

True.

Khan can't do much about his inside game, but - he could try to win the inner conflict between knowledge and motion: that is, staying on the outside, using his superior skill, picking Garcia apart. But nah, he had to get in there, showing what he's made of...and end up on his ***. Not for the last time, of course.

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But Khan is what he is, and as often, the real reason a fighter is loved is because of his weaknesses, and the struggle to overcome them. It is our faults that makes us humans.

Matthew says:

Thanks, Ali.

gibola says:

Khan needs to learn to move his upper body and stop cupping his gloves by his ears and standing upright as a method of defending himself. This defeat was coming, Khan shouldn't have had life and death with Peterson and Maidana but he did and the flaws weren't ironed out. Khan needs to get away from Roach and start afresh using his assets (speed, jab, combinations, mobility, stamina) improve on his weaknesses (defence, too upright, upper body movement). On here TSS readers debate the merits of the so-called super coaches. I would argue that Roach has sat for two years and watched a super-fast boxer get battered by big, wide clubbing punches and done absolutely nothing to solve the problem. Judging by the horrific sparring sessions shown on UK TV they were trying to get Khan to slug in the gym and they paid the price for that too. Amir could outbox Peterson, Maidana and Garcia if he had the camp, mindset and discipline to do so. I was impressed with Khan's guts against Maidana but really, should that be a difficult fight? Not with Khan's talent it shouldn't. Take control Amir, make the changes to yourself, your style and to those around you before you become another tale of wasted talent. I fear it's over for Amir - hope I'm wrong. He's been great for boxing.

Real Talk says:

As soon as I read the first sentence I knew this had to be an F-Lo special. Love it! Now let me finish reading. Dueces