

Is Deontay Wilder The Future of the Heavyweight Division?

Written by Kelsey McCarson
Friday, 05 October 2012 08:55



Remember, Wilder started boxing very late, at age 21. Seen through that frame, his progress is truly impressive. (Hogan)

Casually bring up undefeated heavyweight prospect and 2008 Olympic bronze medalist Deontay Wilder in your favorite boxing discussion forum, and you're sure to elicit one of two responses.

Is Deontay Wilder The Future of the Heavyweight Division?

Written by Kelsey McCarson
Friday, 05 October 2012 08:55

For some, he invokes all the gloriousness of America's brilliant heavyweight history. He's yesterday's heavyweight hero, today. He's the victorious amateur competitor who represented his country well on the world's grandest stage, and he's a surefire lock to be the next great heavyweight.

For others, he's everything wrong with the sport of boxing. He's too protected. He takes things too slow. He's a carefully managed prop whose handlers are making the most of his Olympic fame until it's time to cash out.

The 6'7" heavyweight prodigy from Alabama, whose much ballyhooed Olympic exploits came only three years after he first stepped into a boxing gym, is well aware of all that, too.

"Everybody has their own opinion," the gregarious contender told me by phone earlier this week. "When you go with the good, you've got to go with the bad. I don't really take any of it personal."

It's easy to see what people like about him as a fighter. Wilder has a pristine record. From a statistical point of view, you really can't ask for anything more. He's had twenty-five fights in his four-year professional career thus far, and he's won every single one of them by knockout.

Still, his opposition has been less than stellar thus far, so fight fans have become increasingly anxious to see him fight against more worthy competition.

When I first talked to Wilder's manager, Jay Deas, over a year and a half ago, he told me he and co-manager, Shelly Finkel were doing everything in their power to get their fighter as many rounds as possible. Deas told me his fighter's total ring time up to that point, including his thirty or so amateur fights, had actually totaled only about four hours.

"I'm still trying to get him rounds!" Deas told me again this week. "He just got back today from Audley Harrison's camp for the David Price fight."

Is Deontay Wilder The Future of the Heavyweight Division?

Written by Kelsey McCarson
Friday, 05 October 2012 08:55

Yep, from the very beginning, Deas told me the idea was to take their time with Wilder's progression. Slow and steady wins the race. While Wilder enjoyed brilliant success in his brief amateur career, he wasn't necessarily as far along as your typical boxing prospect, someone who traditionally starts boxing at a very young age.

"Lot of people criticized me back then, too," Wilder recalled. "They said I was too late. They said I was too green. I'm always playing catch-up! I was in there fighting guys that started when they were five and six years old, and here I am, a guy that started when he was twenty-one."

Wilder believes in himself. You can hear it in his voice. He did back then, too, when he became perhaps the most inexperienced boxer to ever medal in the Olympic Games before, and he does so now that he's set on becoming heavyweight champion of the world.

"I believe through hard work, anything is possible," he said. "Just like my professional career now, I was hungry back then. I had a big heart. That's the one you can't measure - a guy's heart. You can't measure the intensity he has, the drive and the hunger."

He said the last part emphatically.

"When I set my mind to something, there is nothing that is going to get in the way of what I've got to do."

Say what you want about his level of opposition, he's knocked out every single one of them and that's no easy feat. We see it all the time in boxing: some palooka no one has ever heard of goes the distance with a world class fighter.

While we don't know if Wilder is a world class fighter yet, we do know that no one has even come close to going the distance with him.

Is Deontay Wilder The Future of the Heavyweight Division?

Written by Kelsey McCarson
Friday, 05 October 2012 08:55

Wilder said the knockout streak isn't really something he worries about. He knows it's there in the back of his mind, but it doesn't dictate what he tries to get done.

"I just go in there and basically just try to work on what I have been working on in the gym," he said. "I try to be perfect in there, because we train for perfection."

His record is perfect so far, but he's not quite perfect as a fighter. Like any young prizefighter with limited experience, Wilder has some flaws. He tends to leave his power hand out in front of him too long after delivering a punch, and he's yet to put together the type of consistent jab that, with his size and quickness, would help make him closer to invincible.

Deas and company have him on the right track, though. If you watch Wilder's progression, you can see definite and consistent improvement in his footwork and movement as he's moved through the ranks. Moreover, he's gone from being borderline wild to increasingly patient. And, there's the power, of course, which is the one thing you just have to be born with.

"I keep telling everybody, I still don't know the measurement of my power," he told me. "It kind of scares me. Even sparring at some of these camps, I've licked some of these guys up pretty good and they tell me the same, you know."

Wilder has been in camp with some of the very best heavyweights in the world, guys like David Haye and Tomasz Adamek, so if that's indeed the case then it bodes quite well for his future in the division.

But fight fans are ready to see something now, not later.

When I talked to Deas this week, he told me he was excited about an upcoming opportunity he believed Wilder was about to have to with Showtime in December. Sure enough, reports have recently surfaced that Wilder will be the showcase fighter for Showtime's December 15th date. Deas says when he saw Wilder's promoter, Golden Boy Promotions, sign a promotional deal earlier this year with six of the 2012 men's U.S. Olympic team members, he immediately thought it'd be a great idea to have Deontay as the headliner for some of their early cards. After

Is Deontay Wilder The Future of the Heavyweight Division?

Written by Kelsey McCarson
Friday, 05 October 2012 08:55

all, he told me, Wilder remains the last man to actually medal at the Olympics.

It appears that will come to pass now, and Wilder couldn't be more excited about the opportunity to show his skills to a larger audience. While he's been featured on ESPN's Friday Night Fights as well as some Fox Sports shows, this will be his first appearance on a major boxing network's broadcast and could help position him as one of Golden Boy Promotions' premier fighters.

"Everybody gets an opportunity to really prove themselves, and I feel like my opportunity is just around the corner," Wilder said.

An opponent hasn't been announced yet, but Deas mentioned a level of competition fight fans could really get excited about. He said he wants Wilder in there with someone who can make him work, and that they've tried that in the past but Wilder has just knocked everyone out so it's time to up the ante.

Wilder says he's ready.

If you follow him on twitter, you know he's vocal about who he wants to fight (everyone) and how he believes he will beat any fighter he faces. He's even mentioned the Klitschko brothers as possible competition despite never even having faced someone ranked in the top ten.

This last week, he got into a heated twitter battle with another American heavyweight prospect, Bryant Jennings. Wilder told me he'd be glad to fight Jennings, but that he has to let his management team do their job. Still, he understands the mentality of fight fans who might not understand why the fight wasn't made.

"Fans just want to see the fight," he said. "They don't care if it's for one dollar – they just want the fight. I know that."

Is Deontay Wilder The Future of the Heavyweight Division?

Written by Kelsey McCarson
Friday, 05 October 2012 08:55

I asked him specifically about the dust-up with Jennings. While their back and forth was heated at times, it also seemed good natured in a way, like some sort of verbal sparring competition.

“I have nothing personal against the guy,” he told me. “I wish him well. I’m sure he feels the same way.”

Wilder told me that he likes to come back at people just as strong as they come at him whether their fighters or fans. He’s competitive that way. It’s all good natured though, and he wishes them well at the end of it.

All in all, maybe the best thing about Wilder is something you can really only get a sense of when interacting with him. It’s not really identifiable in YouTube clips of his knockout wins, and I’ve yet to really read about it anywhere else either. He simply has a tremendous attitude. He absolutely beams with excitement about his life as a fighter, and he genuinely seems to look forward to accomplishing his goals no matter how long it takes him.

“I think about it all the time,” he told me when I asked him about working to become heavyweight champion of the world. “I can’t wait. I can’t wait for my opportunity.”

Wilder said he was being patient. He said whoever takes over for the Klitschko brothers will have to be special, and he believes he can be that guy. We ended our conversation looking ahead to what he hopes to be his future, and why maybe everyone might someday be wild about Deontay Wilder.

“I want to be the one that takes both of the [Klitschko] brothers out of this game,” he said, at once both brash and affable. “When I beat them, I want them to be happy they are out of the game they’ve been holding down the whole time, and I want them to say ‘Deontay Wilder took us out, and we wouldn’t be more proud of anyone to hold our titles while we are retired and gone than him’”.

[Comment on this article](#)

Is Deontay Wilder The Future of the Heavyweight Division?

Written by Kelsey McCarson
Friday, 05 October 2012 08:55

Radam G says:

The jury is still out. And they are leaning toward NYET! Holla!

deepwater says:

he is the future of the hw division but what kind of future will he be? will he be like that english gold medal bum? will he still be fighting butterbean type guys? will he ever be matched against a live full time boxer or just cans and such? he shouldnt be so protected and he should be flying all over the country sparring killers and learn his craft the proper way. who knows what will happen but it would be nice if he can put the hard work in ,take some beatings in some gym wars and give american at least one hw champ . he needs adversity in training so when he does fight a guy that actually wants to win he wont be overcome. I nominate him to come to gleasons and get in with big truck wayne braithwaite for a few weeks.

brownsugar says:

I like it that Wilder has taken his time,... It's Better than watching Seth Mitchell nearly get caught up in his own hype and barely survive a KO loss against the lite hitting Witherspoon.

In that regard I think Wilder is the more natural boxer, not having to change his muscle memory from one sport to another in his middle twenties.

Now is the time for some incremental increases in the class of his opponents to find out where he truly stands.

There are many Journeymen and young contenders who can take him into deep waters.

Over-management can be as harmful as throwing a young fighter to the lions.

But I feel Wilder believes in himself and is ready to be tested.

2013 will be a crucial year for Wilder, especially if he can get past the upper hierarchy of the heavyweight division, If he's successful, he's a sure shot to get a piece of the heavyweight title.

It's time for his management team and promoters to believe in him and take him off the short leash.

Radam G says:

I say to test Wilder against the Cali Crusher Cris Arreola. And Wilder will be thought of as being milder. Dude is more hype than fight. Sorry? But too often, I've seen this sight. Holla!

the Roast says:

Wilder needs to step up the comp level and get on TV already. I can be open minded. Maybe he

Is Deontay Wilder The Future of the Heavyweight Division?

Written by Kelsey McCarson
Friday, 05 October 2012 08:55

is just late to the sport and is learning as he goes ala JCC Jr. Would Wilder KO a fighter like Witherspoon? Like him or not at least Mitchell took his step up B-Sug. I hope we see Wilder on HBO soon in a step up fight. Arreola might be too big a step forward right now Radam. A fight with Jennings seems just right. Jennings is more of a test than Whitherspoon but less dangerous than Arreola. I hope Wilder can fight. Boxing always needs new stars. Heavyweight is starving for a new star. Step up Wilder!!

Radam G says:

I'm as closed minded as dat chick, who wouldn't open up her legs and give me a peep, back in da day. Now every time that I get near the bed, those legs fly open. Hehehehe! I'm da MAN!

For a heavy, the Roast, Wilder didn't start late. About 70 percent of the ATG heavyweights started so-alleged late. That list includes Rocky Marciano, Jack Dempsey and Sonny Liston, to name a few. For the record, I can name a ton of heavies who stepped up within two years of professional fighting after starting in the amateurs at 18 to 22 years old. Heavyweights are different types of monsters. An iota of these heavies didn't even have much of an amateur career. A couple didn't have one, PERIOD!

The game reveals a man [and nowadays a woman too] like no other sports will, so Jim Lampley has said. Dude is SPOT on. Even stiffs, back in da day, like Jess Willard and Primo Canera step UP. So what in da double fudge is wrong with Milder -- I mean Childer? OMFG! I mean Wilder! [Hahaha!] He ain't near as good as the hype or just maybe he needs to discover that he has some XX cojones. Holla!

ali says:

I would throw Wilder in there with Adamek I think be tough test for him but I think its one he would pass.