

## Wladimir Reveals He And Steward Cried Together

Written by Michael Woods

Thursday, 08 November 2012 12:31

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EPIX boxing head Travis Pomposello on a Wednesday conference call hailed Wladimir Klitschko as "one of the greatest heavyweight champions of all time" and I wouldn't be so bold as to dispute that. His skill set, arguably, would have stood out in any era. But let us not forget, first he was "the heir apparent," and then he was damaged goods, a chinny big man who caused the first thought to be put in your head after being rubbed out by Corrie Sanders and gassing out against Lamon Brewster to be: TIMBERRRR!

It was Emanuel Steward who put Wlad back together, more mentally than physically, patiently coaxing him, massaging his brain and ego, to believe in himself, to relax and let his superior skills shine through. The flailing, anxiety ridden fighter who panicked like a drowning man when he got buzzed was replaced by a calm customer who shored up his holes to the point that he didn't get buzzed nearly as much, and when he did, was able to soldier on. Yes, Klitschko deserves excess credit for this rebuild...but one has to wonder if he could have pulled it out

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without the Stewardship.

On Saturday, Wladimir will be without Steward in his corner for the first time since he met Dannell Nicholson in December 2003. Johnathon Banks will corner Wlad, and Banks spoke about that honor on the conference call to hype the scrap, which unfolds in Hamburg at the O2 Arena, and can be seen in the States on EPIX. (Yours truly will be live-Tweeting the fight and the opener, a Robert Helenius-Sherman Williams faceoff, for EPIX, and you have my solemn pledge I will not mention Obama or Romney or the fiscal cliff even once!)

"Camp has been going really good," Banks said on the call. "We had a few setbacks or maybe a disappointment by losing one of the greatest trainers of all time, in my mind, in Emanuel Steward. Outside of that camp is good. Everyone's spirits are high and as always we look forward to a beautiful fight."

Wladimir touched on the loss of Manny, the election in the US, his replacement cornerman and how he sees the fight with Wach going.

"I would also like to share my feeling about Emanuel Steward," said the 36 year-old. "He was a great-great friend and one of the geniuses in boxing. He is not here, but we know his spirit is with us and around us. He is laughing and enjoying himself and also looking forward to that fight – I know that for sure."

He shifted gears and spoke about the Tuesday night news, that President Obama would receive a second term in office. "On the other hand, I would like to congratulate all of the Obama supporters and congratulate President Obama for winning the election. I understand politically people can be divided but it is what it is in politics. It has been on TV all day in Germany – all of the people have been following and the outcome everyone knows.

"Of course, regarding the fight – I have been going through the camp which has been a little bit different by losing Emanuel. On the other hand he is with us in spirit. I also want to mention something about Johnathon Banks. Of course everyone has been wondering who is going to be my next coach. I knew from the beginning that it was going to be Johnathon Banks. The man has learned a lot from Emanuel Steward – I met them both on the same day over nine years ago. Johnathon has been learning a lot from the Kronk spirit. Of course Johnathon Banks is not

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Emanuel Steward – he is Johnathon Banks." (I must say, I was surprised by the selection of Banks; he is still a prospect, who owns a sterling 28-1-1 record since turning pro in 2004. It is more than rare for an active boxer of medium talent to replace a Hall of Fame coach cornering a future Hall of Fame fighter.) "Though everyone has their own way of doing things," Wlad continued, "and I think, considering everything, the camp went well.

"I had some good sparring partners," he said. "Deontay Wilder was one of the greatest sparring partners I have ever had. He gave me a lot of speed and is a really talented guy. We enjoyed those sparring sessions that we had. I am also looking forward to this challenge in the ring. My opponent is undefeated, younger, heavier, taller, and has a longer reach, and everything like that. We had today an open workout with Maruisz Wach and his coach was making a little fun by putting my face on the pads and hitting my face many times. It was something that was entertaining to watch. However, in the ring on Saturday, November 10, he will face the real Wladimir Klitschko, not just images on the pads. I think it is going to be a real exciting fight because Wach has the spirit of a young man that wants to become world champion. He is very self-confident and I am expecting him to be better than he usually can be because that is his motivation – his chance to be world champion and I am expecting a very good fight from Wach."

I am expecting Wach to get crushed, but one does never know, so I will monitor.

Wlad went into greater detail about how what Manny meant to him. "It clicked from the beginning," he said. "I have spent more time with Emanuel in the last nine years than I have with my own father. The relationship between Emanuel and me was very special – not just a regular relationship between a coach and a boxer, I assure you of that because he respected my experience inside and out of the ring. I respected his experience outside of the ring as a coach. Our first work was not successful – it was the first time I fought Lamon Brewster in 2004 - a fight that I lost. After which we both broke down in tears," he said, laughing, "because we couldn't believe what happened to us."

Picture that, will you? Can I convey to you how touching it would have been for the fighter to see the trainer weep with him, as comrades, instead of judging or critiquing? That right there synthesizes Steward's greatest asset as a trainer, I think...

"I have mentioned it before- Emanuel Steward is a genius in the ring and it is something and it makes me feel privileged to have worked with him for many years and be a friend with such a legend and a genius that we have in boxing. The last time I spoke to Emanuel was 2½ weeks

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ago and the only line that I got to hear from him was "Hello, hello, how ya' doing?" Unfortunately that was the last words that I heard from Emanuel. His voice was very strong and his wife Marie held the phone. He wasn't able to speak too much but that was the last line I heard from Emanuel – a strong, happy and clear sounding voice."

The fighter said he will attend the Nov. 13 memorial in Michigan to honor the trainer.

Programming note: Klitschko (58-3, 51 KOs; holds WBA, IBF, WBO, IBO belts), of Kiev, Ukraine, will defend his unified titles beginning at 4:30 p.m. ET / 1:30 p.m. PT, on EPIX, the multiplatform premium entertainment service. EpixHD.com will stream the fights live as part of a special free trial offer for boxing fans. The 6-6 hitter meets 6'7 1/2 Mariusz Wach (27-0, 15 KOs), a native of Poland who fights out of North Bergen, NJ, at the O2 World Arena in Hamburg, Germany. The telecast will include a tribute to Steward, who passed away on October 25.

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### **Radam G says:**

And it is all right for grow men to cry. And to do it together. Long live GBG Manny! And win, Doc. Wlad, WIN! Holla!

### **deepwater says:**

I cry everytime I watch klitcho fight. That big chin might Score a big upset. Klitcho gets emo in there he might actually rumble and get caught .

### **Bernie Campbell says:**

I wonder what Volod's ulterior motiv is for giving Kudos to that big stiff Wilder! The 2008 olympics are over and he hasnt fought a 40 year old Jameel McCline yet. I think the wrong brother is in politics!

### **Bernie Campbell says:**

I wonder what the motive why Volod is giving Kudos to Wilder! Seems like the wrong brother is in politics!

### **Bernie Campbell says:**

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Robert Helenius will kick major West Indian behind today on the scheduled Klitschko-Wach doubleheader provided by Epix! Sherman Williams who has 11 losses and whose claim to fame was giving it a go with a geriatric Evander Holyfield! Is giving up 8 inches for the fight!