

Wladimir Dominated Povetkin "The Tweener"

Written by Frank Lotierzo
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Wladimir Klitschko 61-3 (51) and Alexander Povetkin 26-1 (18) fought this past weekend in Olimpiyskiy, Moscow, Russia for Klitschko's WBO/WBA/IBF heavyweight titles. When it was over Klitschko left the ring with a unanimous decision victory, retaining his vast collection of heavyweight title belts.

When I suggest above that they fought, I say it loosely. Actually, they attempted to fight and box, however there was some low brow grappling and even some attempted Judo throws on Klitschko's part. Add to that Wladimir breaks the rules a lot, and he's a tough guy for any average size, average-talented opponent like Povetkin to penetrate and break. Perhaps since Wladimir is willing to use illegal tactics (which he's actually pretty good at) Povetkin should have tried to injure him and not to worry so much about beating him. Simply because some boxing observers believe that both Wladimir and Vitali, if they're convinced that they've been injured or their health is at risk, they'll resign from the fight, especially Wladimir. At this point, that may be the best chance anyone has to beat them. In a round-about way, that is a testament to how superior they are to their opposition and those qualified to challenge them.

Klitschko-Povetkin was a deplorable heavyweight title bout on behalf of both fighters. It was sloppy and hard to watch. Klitschko was definitely frustrated by Povetkin mauling him in his attempt to get inside. And Povetkin exhibited little head and upper-body movement in trying to nullify Klitschko's long arms and reach. Povetkin knew he had no chance to score the upset unless he pressed the fight, it's just that not only is Wladimir hard to get inside on, Povetkin lacked the needed skill and power to really force Klitschko to do anything he didn't want to, despite his willingness to at least try. Being a swarmer like Povetkin without fight altering power is really a tough hill to climb when confronting Wladimir.

Every round of the bout looked like the previous one, with the exception of the four knockdowns that Klitschko scored. Povetkin was hurt by one big shot from Wladimir throughout the fight, yet cautious Wladimir with the exception of one time late in the bout, never really tried to finish

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Alexander in a memorable fashion. And that's why so many sophisticated boxing fans and media hold their nose when they have to laud Wladimir with his earned praise for being a dominant champ. He hasn't lost in nine years and you don't need two full hands to count the rounds he's lost since 2005.

Wladimir Klitschko is physically very strong and he can hit with his right hand and left-hook. However, he's fortunate that every heavyweight fighter in the world today is a tweener. In other words, they don't have any identity. There's not one great boxer or puncher among them, nor is there one who is terrifically skilled or fast who can really box and fight.

In essence, all that Wladimir and Vitali Klitschko have to do is show up in great shape, which they always do, and not do anything stupid and they are 90% home. Their opponents don't present them with anything they have to worry about or address, whereas their opponents have to address their size, strength and ring IQ pertaining to them knowing what they do best. While preparing for Povetkin, was there anything that Alexander could bring to the ring that Wladimir had to be terribly concerned about? No, there wasn't. He didn't have to worry about Povetkin's power, nor his work-rate. He knew Povetkin lacked hand and foot speed and that he wouldn't be difficult to hit and time if he was intent on pressing the fight. What Klitschko really had to worry about was not beating himself or making a mistake. As long as Wladimir was willing to make Povetkin have to solve him, he was okay, being that he held the advantage in size, strength, power, reach and experience.

Wladimir doesn't want to trade or engage, he wants to pot-shot and cherry-pick safe and sure shots - knowing he only needs a couple clean ones to cease whatever is coming back at him. If they aren't there he holds and paws, trying to induce his opponent to do something stupid or desperate, and he'll wait for however long it takes.

There isn't a fight plan imaginable that any trainer or fight tactician can devise to beat either Wladimir or Vitali Klitschko. A strategist can have the greatest fight plan in the world, but it won't mean anything if his fighter is a tweener and has no stylistic or physical identity. It'll take a physical talent who does something in the ring (box, punch, put combinations together with speed) that causes the brothers to worry about during camp. And as far down the road as can be seen, there isn't one heavyweight prospect on the horizon who that can be said about. Vitali is 42 and Wladimir is 37, it's plausible that the end of the run is in sight for both of them. So the odds are growing that they'll be taken down and defeated by father time more than any heavyweight in the running to be their next opponent.

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Sadly there isn't a time machine that could bring Wladimir/Vitali back to 1960 and fight Sonny Liston or bring Liston up to 2013 and have him fight one of them. (*That time machine, if only we could have it deliver George Foreman, pictured, circa 1973, to fight Wlad*).

All that can be said without trepidation is that since the end of the Tyson/Holyfield/Lewis era, the brothers have owned and dominated the heavyweight division as much as other past greats have. The problem is, they've feasted on a generation of heavyweights with no identity, fighters I refer to as tweeners, and that's not their fault. It would be something to see them have to confront one of the past greats from the 70s, 80s or 90s. That would be a good gauge and barometer on how good or great they really are. Right now it's most accurate to submit that at the least they've dominated the way they should have and didn't squander their talent or opportunity.

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Hop says:

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-- Guess I don't need to ask what he thinks of Deontay Wilder.