

“This Was Not a Precise Version of Wladimir Klitschko”

Written by Kelsey McCarson
Wednesday, 09 October 2013 09:58



“It was dreadful.”

That was Hall of Fame broadcaster Al Bernstein’s appraisal of Wladimir Klitschko’s unanimous decision victory over top contender Alexander Povetkin on Saturday in Moscow.

While [“Big, Bad Wlad”](#) became the undisputed [lineal champion](#) of the heavyweight division and retained a slew of alphabet belts, Bernstein said the bout was madly repetitive.

“Povetkin is a limited fighter. He couldn’t figure out what to do, and so we had this amazingly repetitive fight. Povetkin comes in, Wladimir leans on him and the referee breaks them. I mean, if it happened once, it happened 50 times in that fight.”

Bernstein is wrong. According to an astute [TSS forum](#) poster, there were actually 181 such instances in the fight.

“It was just astonishing,” said Bernstein.

Bernstein said it wasn’t all Klitschko’s doing. He said Povetkin played a part in it by not changing his approach as the fight progressed despite suffering four knockdowns in the contest and losing just about every single round.

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“Povetkin’s corner couldn’t figure out one single way to have him do one different thing? How do you do the same thing over and over again for 12 rounds knowing the result is going to be exactly the same? I mean, I don’t even know. If you and I were playing in a racquetball game, and you kept doing the same thing over and over again and kept getting a point, even if I didn’t think I was capable of doing something else, I would try something else.”

Still, Bernstein said the brunt of the criticism should be aimed squarely at Klitschko. More specifically, Bernstein said he believes Klitschko’s skills are beginning to erode, and that it’s up to him to figure out why.

“This wasn’t the best version of Wladimir Klitschko,” he said. “Look, it’s easy to pile on. Wladimir is 37 years old now. Manny [Steward’s] passing is going to be difficult for him. This is in no way a rap against Jonathan Banks. I’m not trying to put him down in any way. But some of the things that Manny instilled in him, things that made him watchable and hard to beat, are things you can see eroding now. They may be eroding because of age. They may be eroding because of not as much daily attention. But in this fight...this was not a precise version of Wladimir Klitschko.”

Klitschko has now accomplished just about everything a heavyweight champion could. Since grabbing the IBF and IBO title straps in 2006 against Chris Byrd, Wladimir has proven to be the best heavyweight in the world. He’s unified every championship belt he can, save the WBC version his brother owns, and is clearly the top heavyweight on the planet. In fact, Klitschko’s dominance compares quite well statistically with the very best heavyweights ever.

Klitschko’s title reign of over seven years is the second longest in history (Joe Louis held it for nearly 12 years). Saturday’s win was his 15th consecutive title defense, which is third most ever behind only Joe Louis (25) and Larry Holmes (19). Moreover, Klitschko is now tied with Muhammad Ali for second most total title bout wins (22).

That’s great company. Unfortunately for Klitschko, dominance is only half of the equation. The other is good, old-fashioned entertainment value.

“That match was not exciting. It was a match that needed to happen because Povetkin had built himself to a certain point,” Bernstein said. “But it does typify that right now...in terms of depth, the heavyweight division is not a good place. It’s not just that it’s not American...it’s that the

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division is not compelling enough.”

Bernstein said it was difficult for non-American heavyweights to gain traction with fans on this side of the pond, but not impossible.

“Lennox Lewis eventually caught on enough in America so that people got a kick out of him. He fought the people he was supposed to fight. He was more entertaining than Klitschko. Yeah, there were moments [during his career] where he fought in the same style, but Lennox was more entertaining. He was better than Klitschko to be perfectly candid. He was more fluid and more entertaining.”

For the best boxing coverage, stay tuned to [The Sweet Science](#) and [Boxing Channel](#) . To order Al Bernstein’s book, *30 Years, 30 Undeniable Truths about Boxing, Sports, and TV* , go [here](#)

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The Shadow says:

I don't agree with your statements Editor Mike. Wlad is the top heavyweight, yes, but he's not the best nor is he proven to be the best. Far from it. He's not even the best among his siblings. Vitali is still considerably better.

Spinach Chin says:

Wlad catches a lot of deserved flak for his style, but let's not forget the timid manner in which Lennox Lewis beat Holyfield and David Tua (his biggest threats) to name two. I forgive him

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The Shadow says:

Agreed. I didn't like Lennox' leaning either but he at least could fight in a dog fight if he had to. He came forward like a 6-5 version Joe Frazier (OK, a "slight" overstatement but you know what I mean...).

I could NEVER see Wlad fighting that way. Imagine Wlad in the ring that night vs. Lennox. That uppercut Vitali took would've had Wlad looking like he did on David Haye's shirt.

louisvillelip2 says:

Probably wasn't a great fight by heavyweight standards, but could not have stunk up the joint worse than Lennox Lewis' fight against David Tua. If I saw the chump on the street, I'd hit him up for the money my wife and I wasted watching that dance on closed circuit at a bar. Lewis was boring to watch unless he thought someone actually had a chance to beat him, then he brought both cannons blazing. The Klitschko's have dominated so long, it's easy to forget they did have a few wars. Wlad knocked out Ray Mercer in 2002, something Holyfield and Lewis could never pull off. Vitali's performance against Corrie Sanders was memorable because of his punch connect percentage, and most heavies ducked Sanders. Vitali was also ahead on the scorecards before injuries against Lewis and Byrd. You can knock the brothers' wins against mediocre competition, but throughout their careers they have never ducked anyone. Can't be said of many fighters nowadays.

Radam G says:

@louisvillelips2

Wrong! They ducked the near-prime James "Lights Out" Toney. Holla!

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Carmine Cas says:

That's interesting Radam, when did they duck Lights Out?

Bernie Campbell says:

Would you buy a used car from these guys! Hell yes! Guy on the left!

Spinach Chin says:

Lights Out Toney was #1 contender in 03-04, and it's fair to say both brothers ducked him. Hard to imagine Toney winning back then, but he would have been by far the best fighter they'd ever been in the ring with.

Radam G says:

The K-bros/docs are/were in to Light Out Toney. They listened to the great, late boxing guru Manny Steward, who a 98 ditto 98 percent of the time on heavies. Holla!

amayseng says:

[QUOTE=Radam G;38450]The K-bros/docs are/were in to Light Out Toney. They listened to the great, late boxing guru Manny Steward, who a 98 ditto 98 percent of the time on heavies. Holla![/QUOTE]

yep Manny knew that Toney was too slick and sharp for Wlad, I think he would have beaten wlad but not Vitali

Spinach Chin says:

It's a testament to Toney's skills that we're talking about a 5'10" natural light heavyweight beating 6'6" Wlad, that's just how good he was when motivated.

Carmine Cas says:

Would they have beaten Toney in 05 or 06? It slips my mind, when did he start really declining?

amayseng says:

[QUOTE=Carmine Cas;38492]Would they have beaten Toney in 05 or 06? It slips my mind, when did he start really declining?[/QUOTE]

in 2003 he beat holyfield, looked sharp and not worn yet and in 2005 he beat Ruiz but tested for a banned substance and a nc was the result.

Bernie Campbell says:

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What the fch do you want? A paper ballot with grammar school marks just for a fcn running mate!

Domenic says:

Both Klitschkos were deathly afraid of Toney and both avoided him like the plague. They were very aware that they'd be KO'd by him, so they steered clear. It was until the Sam Peters fights that Toney's speaking required subtitles. Before those, he was the best heavyweight in the world bar none. Even Lewis wanted absolutely nothing to do with Toney. Today Toney may not fare too well. He's punchier than Meldrick Taylor, but I suppose there's still a 30% chance he'd KO a Klitschko right now.

brownsugar says:

I think the ref should have taken control of the fight...That was not boxing. Povetkin is right to protest...although he will never beat WK.

Regarding James Toney... No respectable heavyweight would fight a man who slurs so bad that he needs an interpreter...and on screen captions when he talks.

amayseng says:

b-sug we were referring to toney back in the day when he first went up in weight and was still a healthy fighter who could have presented wlad some problems at hw.

i agree for now though, he should not be fighting, in fact his health is a concern in general even out of the ring.

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My bad ... If that's the case its up for debate... I'll always remember Toney as the man at middleweight for a short time (although he couldnt handle Jones)..don't even know how he wound up facing Samuel Peter twice.

He was overweight...punchy Far past his prime and still giving heavyweights a hard time.