

If Hopkins Wants The Ultimate Challenge, Fight Kovalev Or Stevenson

Written by Frank Lotierzo

Monday, 02 December 2013 14:22



For anyone who has read this column before, you have to know the abundance of respect I have for IBF light heavyweight title holder Bernard Hopkins 54-6-2 (32) as a fighter and thinker, both in and out of the ring. Hopkins is the oldest and most successful fighter in boxing history. He has the discipline of a Chinese monk and the confidence and courage of an alpha male lion. He's also rare breed of bully, being that he is a front runner and will attempt to bully anyone, only he doesn't back down when he's punched back or met with resistance mentally or physically.

Hopkins is no doubt one of the pound-for-pound best fighters in boxing, and he's one month shy of his 49th birthday. He's won and defended both the middleweight and light heavyweight titles and is looking to close out his career with a signature fight and win.

A few months ago he talked about meeting pound-for-pound king Floyd Mayweather in a ridiculous catch-weight bout at 160. That went nowhere and will never happen, so he better look for another monumental challenge that is more realistic. And guess what, he doesn't have to look any further than his own division. This past weekend two light heavyweights who are both making a lot of noise fought on the same card and scored impressive knockouts.

The first was a legitimate life-taker named Sergey Kovalev 23-0-1 (21), who destroyed Ismayl Sillakh 21-2 (17) in less than four minutes of fighting. Sillakh was no patsy, yet he was virtually undone the first time Kovalev touched him with something big. Kovalev has dynamite in both hands and he's clearly a tough guy who harbors no fear and is only concerned with decapitating his opponent with every punch.

After Kovalev went through Sillakh, WBC light heavyweight title holder Adonis Stevenson 23-1 (20) took apart a tough guy named Tony Bellew 20-2-1 (12) in six rounds. Stevenson (*seen in photo by Ed Mulholland for HBO*)

had to work harder than Kovalev did to get the knockout, but his showing was impressive just the same. Stevenson is more reckless than Kovalev and is more one hand reliant, but he's very physically strong and is awkward to fight because of his southpaw style and power. It appears that Kovalev and Stevenson are on a collision course to meet sometime next year. And therein lies Hopkins' chance to do something really spectacular, and that's challenge and then knock off

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either Kovalev or Stevenson before they get to each other.

As great as Hopkins has been and was as a fighter, it's always been scary to pick against him. I've seldom picked against him and have contended that I'd rather be wrong picking him to win than get it wrong picking him to lose. That said, I think Hopkins would be a sizable underdog to both Kovalev and Stevenson.

However, if he were to fight and beat either one before they met, it would be an off-the-charts accomplishment and perhaps the most significant and defining victory of his storied career. Sergy Kovalev impresses me as a tough guy, top to bottom, someone who you can't psyche out at all. If you beat him, you've got to actually beat him. There's no way Hopkins could get over on Kovalev with experience and deception alone, he'd have to physically fight him and hope that he possessed something in his arsenal that could slow Sergy down a bit. Kovalev doesn't give you a moment's rest to let you do that. Besides Ward, I don't see anyone around who I'd pick to beat him.

As for Stevenson, his style and semi-awkwardness along with his strength and power would be a tall order for Hopkins to contend with. However, Stevenson I believe, might be vulnerable to Hopkins mind games and ring trickery. I could see a scenario where if Stevenson didn't hurt Bernard early, and Hopkins stood up to him early in the bout, Adonis might become un-nerved by Hopkins' game and thug mentality once he's in war mode. Again, it's a big maybe, but at least there's an imaginable path to victory for Hopkins versus Stevenson, as opposed to none if he were to confront Kovalev.

For Hopkins, he's either had to look below or above his natural weight division for a monumental challenge. Not now, both Kovalev and Stevenson are right there breathing down his neck. Aside from Hopkins, they're clearly the two best and most formidable light heavyweights in the world. It's hard to make a compelling case that Hopkins would come out on top against either one of them if they fought, and that's the challenge he said he needs to get truly motivated to fight at his advanced age.

It would be a sight to see how Hopkins would navigate the disciplined aggression and power of Sergy Kovalev. It would be nearly just as drama filled watching how Hopkins would go about getting inside of Stevenson's head and mind in an attempt to trip him up and neutralize his style and strength.

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Again, if Hopkins somehow defeated either Kovalev or Stevenson at age 49, it would be perhaps the most impressive victory of his ring career, one that would elevate his stature among the greatest of the greats. Sure, Hopkins is already considered one of the greats, but a win over Kovalev or Stevenson would surpass George Foreman's victory over Michael Moorer or Roberto Duran's victory over Iran Barkley, just to name a few. If Hopkins wants to exit boxing with a signature win, then he has a great chance to achieve that by taking on and beating Kovalev or Stevenson in 2014.

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Radam G says:

B-Hop's greatest fight would be to duck both. Many greats tried for that last "signature win," and ended up looking like a man of tin. Larry Holmes whuppin' up on GOAT Ali comes to mind. That was a deadly metaphoric sin.

The most important thing in da game is having a brain, not a heart. The scarecrow -- in the enchanted Land of Oz -- was a deep thinker. Boksing is a thinking-man's sport. Having-a-heart sport for a "signature win" will get you all wet and weathered KTFO!

Pride fighting is for the boxing dummy. And will quickly make you a mummy. Now B-Hop should let Superman S and Krusher K dance with one another. Then he could give the loser a shot -- likely Kovalez by a devastating one-punch KAYO after taking a beating. Holla!

BFF says:

i agree with you radam g, but thats not fair to the other title holders who are willing to fight him to take his crown. if ppl say bhop is too old and past his prime and that he would get destroyed by these younger hungrier lions, then maybe its time for him to give up his throne and let these cats take over, and if he excepts the challenge and wins then that would show his mark as a true champ, if he loses then that would truly mean his time is up, and that the krusher or superman are legit champs...just my personal opinion though.

teaser says:

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just as the light heavy division is getting hot you want the executioner to ruin the two most exciting fighters in the division ?....don't worry ..Bhop ain't no fool and won't be picking a fight he can't win ...but the one he does pick better be wary cause Bhop can smell as well as see weaknessas Radman says this is prize not pride fighting and Bernard wants that prize

SouthPaul says:

Well said, Raging Radam. Hopkins should chase Andre Ward. He'll lose, yes, but it'll be less taxing. Less difficult to contract too.

SouthPaul says:

Truthfully, I already feel the boxing world is overrating Kovalev's worth. He ain't the boxing boogie man.

Radam G says:

Ditto SouthPaul! BFF, first, welcome aboard! Next, da-whup-ur-@as and duck-ur-@\$ game is a metaphor for life, which ain't fair. Seedy, shady and shifty jive is everywhere. A person has to deal with the actuality and reality of his atmosphere. There can be nothing more clear. Or he/she will disappear. Survival of the fittest, BABEEE!

One of my late, great godfathers -- Music man "Tiny Tim" -- said that "boxing (and life) is like a banana -- crooked! And everybodee goes 'APE SH*T' about it."

Maybe you are a romanticist about so-called fairness of boxing. My friend, your eyes are going to spin in your head and your heart is going to be broken. The games is like religion -- a lot of believers sinning their a\$\$e\$ off, but always bytching and complaining and finger pointing. And grandstanding about cleaning up syet. Holla!

brownsugar says:

I can see The Krusher easily tip toeing over the tulips with BHops belt.....But if Bhop can avoid the "strong side" of Stevenson he may eake out a victory... My recommendation would be to go for Superman... Bhop can Change his handle to Lex Luthur, Doomsday, or Apocolype.

Hey where is Hop... You brought a lot of civility to the place... Come on back....Shane.

tlig says:

Kovalev would slap the s**t out of Hopkins. That's the reason I want to see the fight.

But knowing Hops, assuming he takes the bout he'd find a "brave" way out of getting his butt kicked by feigning injury (a la first fight with Dawson) or trying to get the guy disqualified like he did when Calzaghe began overwhelming him.

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Carmine Cas says:

I think he should fight Andre Ward as well

amayseng says:

Mayweather didnt even fight Canelo at the 154 lb weight where Floyd has a legitimate belt at, and was fighting

for Canelos 154 lb belt.....Floyd---the number ONE lb4lb fighter on the planet wont even allow his opponent to come in and fight at the mandated weight where the

titles are at and gets no flak, so why would hopkins being 48 years old??? kinda unfair isnt it....

Where is that article? I cant find it?

BFF says:

Personally I think kovalev would smash Bhop. The krusher's boxing skills are way underrated, he is like tripleG, except 2 weight classes bigger. Look at what the krusher did to cleverly, and clev is a skilled boxer, but got smashed, im just sayin. On the other hand i think Bhop and superman is a close fight given Bhop doesn't get caught with a superman left, coz that could be disastrous for Bhop.

Radam G says:

OMG 2014 is going to be the year of "boogie" men EXPOSED and mirages REVEALED. Fans and fanfaronades repeat the same beliefs year out and year in. Wow! Talking about a long trail of boogie men and mirages, how soon do the excited forgets.

On the top of my head, I can name 22 hypes in the last six years that TSS readers were floozies about. Nonetheless, I looked forward, not backward and calling out the names of the Mike Joneses , Calvin Blocks, Ismayl Sillaykhs, Chazz Witherspoons, Olandier Solises and Mercito Gestas, just to name a few.

The only fighter that I overlooked, and he is making it, is 3g. I've not been wrong about Tim Bradley. He has just been tΔr babied by U.S. American corrupted powers that be who hated the

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rise of Da Manny. Holla!

SouthPawFlo says:

I think Hopkins wins an Easy UD against both.. Experience is something that can't be taken for granted and even at his elevated age he's better than both... I think he'll wear them down mentally when they look up and it's round 7-9 and he's still standing there, he's too disciplined and keeps his defense too tight to get caught with bombs and Hopkins is 10x a better boxer than both....

It'll be another Kelly Pavlik/Tonio Tarver type performance if he fights either....

amayseng says:

Hopkins is a true master and i never count him out of anything even at 48.

Kovalev has great power and also pretty good timing, he would be a tougher out than Superman who seems

left handed dimensional. if Adonis could master the right jab and right hook he would be spectacular. as of

now i could see hopkins taking away that left all night....

But like i said, Why are we questioning a 48 year old about not challenging himself when the best fighter

on the planet continues to find ways to NOT challenge himself????????????????????????????????????????

brownsugar says:

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Nice quote RG

When you think about it....even the best trainers/managers get to pick a few champions during their entire career and if they are lucky they may get one P4P in their life time.

Many of them go through dozens of fighters to get that rare gem.

Its always risky picking a good fighter.

But for those trainers and managers who find that one two or three fighters who excel, it makes up for all the failures. And many excellent trainers go a lifetime without producing a single champion.

You have an excellent eye when it comes to evaluating fighters..

So don't go blind on Kovalev... This guy can't miss.

Radam G says:

I appreciate your response, B-Sug. But it is not quite truth. Good trainers/managers produce tons of champions and P4P top dogs. You don't hear about them worldly, because they don't have the inside-of-the-game-hook-up and connections at the highest level. So they give their fighters off to the designated trainers and managers with the at-the-highest-level hook up and connections.

The Marvelous Marvin Hagglers, Sugar Shane Mosleys and Money Mays and even Hitman Hearns are big-time exceptions to the rules. The game is really in the hands of a very few managers and trainers. Ninety percent of fighters' original trainers and managers have been muscled out by the time that they get the shot.

The original managers and/or trainers who are not muscled out is because they have to take a secondary public role or pay "The protection fee." The game is seedy, shady and sleezy and full of optical illusions. Don't believe more than five percent of what you see, and zero percent of what you hear without verification from the very top crook. Holla!

Radam G says:

By the way, Kovalev is in the mix because he's calmed down with tude and went with one of the corrupted powers that be designated trainers -- John David Jackson. When the maximum amount of moola can be made, Kovalev will be fed to a real shark. And the "Krusher" will no longer bite or bark.

In this "hoort bitnezz," it is all about the smell, not the "... eye!" An eye can and will lie. A smell won't try. "Something smells fishy." And Kovalev is too "I-wanna-fight-everybody" wishy. Holla!

The Good Doctor says:

[QUOTE=Radam G;40699]I appreciate your response, B-Sug. But it is not quite truth. Good trainers/managers produce tons of champions and P4P top dogs. You don't hear about them worldly, because they don't have the inside-of-the-game-hook-up and connections at the

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I agree with you Radam. I think the other reason that we don't hear about good trainers is because for every 1 good trainer, there are 10 or 12 really bad ones and some with decent stables of fighters (Garcia, Mcgirt). I don't know why trainers don't seem to know the sport like they used to but I see fighters on the regular who do not know some basic fighting principles that any trainer worth his salt can get a fighter to do.