

Sergey Kovalev: Like All Perceived Destroyers, He Has Flaws

Written by Frank Lotierzo
Monday, 31 March 2014 21:29



This past weekend WBO light-heavyweight title holder Sergey Kovalev 24-0-1 (22 KOs) successfully defended his title with a seventh round stoppage over Cedric Agnew 26-1 (13 KOs) at Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City.

Kovalev dropped Agnew with a strong left jab to the body around the liver and Agnew was counted out while on one knee with 58 seconds left in the round. It was the third knockdown of the fight scored by Kovalev, but the fight wasn't a walk in the park for him as most thought it would be. On this night he had to go more than the three or four rounds he usually does and he also had to deal with some adversity. He was cut above both eyes due to a head butt and an unintentional elbow from Agnew. In addition to that, Agnew had a plan and despite not winning a single round, he stuck to it until the fight was over regardless of how much Kovalev tried to open him up during the bout.

His fight plan was to try and get Kovalev deep into the fight and hope that the hard punching Russian would tire; not a bad idea, as he hasn't had to go beyond the fifth round more than three times in 24 fights. Well, Agnew never got a chance to find out if Sergey was going to tire and to his credit, Kovalev caught on to Agnew's game and didn't waste many punches while trying to track him down as the fight progressed.

"I tried boxing because he has good defense," Kovalev said. "Then I went to the body. I saw how hurt he was."

Yes, Agnew spent a lot of the fight with his back to the ropes and fighting in retreat, but he did manage to cut loose with a counter attack, with some hard left hooks to the head and body which momentarily caused Kovalev to back off for a brief moment allowing Agnew to get away.

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It's amazing how boxing never changes in that when a supposed genuine destroyer or life-taker the likes of Sergey Kovalev or Gannady Golovkin come along, how every fight that goes rounds is bound to expose flaws the way this past weekend's fight regarding Kovalev did. That doesn't mean he wasn't impressive because he was. Anytime a fighter can drop his opponent two times with a body jab, well, that's outright impressive. But the more you can get a look at a fighter, the more likely it is you'll start to see ways he can be beat. And the Agnew fight began to show some areas where Kovalev might be lacking. Let's start with the positive.

We saw that Kovalev definitely carries his power into the second half of the fight. It's safe to assume that he's a dangerous puncher from rounds one through twelve with both hands. Those kind of fighters are born, not manufactured, regardless of what some cookbook analysts say. Another thing that was easy to pick up on was, more than most fighters, it's really suicide to back straight up against him. Kovalev comes in straight and if you don't pick a side to go back and force him to punch across his body or reach for you, you're a sitting duck for his finishing right hands and hooks. He's sort of like David Tua in that sense..if you keep him turning he's not quite as much of a killer. Something else we saw over the course of the fight with Agnew is how Kovalev stays focused and really doesn't give a damn about his opponent. It doesn't matter what his opponent does, he won't be dissuaded and he's going to come for you.

As for what can be construed as a flaw and an opening for Klovalev's future opponents, there's not much... but he's not an unbreakable dam either. There's no such thing as a totally complete fighter, especially if he's a legitimate knockout artist. As we saw with Mike Tyson when he was forced to go rounds - he wasn't constantly aggressive and fought in spurts and usually drifted mentally if the fight wasn't an early round knockout. George Foreman's stamina wasn't always reliable and as George Chuvalo has often said, "Foreman threw a lot of punches out the window." Former junior middleweight title holder Julian Jackson was a wrecking machine that put together Thomas Hearn's type picturesque knockouts. But as his level of opposition was stepped up and he had to go more rounds, we found out that he couldn't catch nearly as good as he could pitch.

In regards to Kovalev, he really doesn't have much in the hand speed department. He has a good sense of timing and distance but if he doesn't cut loose before his opponent does, he's going to get there second as often as he gets there first. He attacks in a straight line and doesn't try to make his opponent miss. He banks on them waiting to see what he's gonna do because they're concerned with him landing cleanly on them more than the opposite. Another thing that is impossible not to see is that his offense is pretty vanilla and lacks imagination. He's basically a jab-cross-left hook fighter. He's not really looking to trick or set up his opponent, no, he's looking to make solid contact and believes the rest will take care of itself if he connects. When

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Agnew did fire back when he felt Kovalev was looking to reload, I didn't like the way Sergey was jumping back from his punches, especially from a fighter who isn't really much of a puncher. I'm not sure he wasn't hurt once during the fight more so than it looked. Perhaps he wasn't as hurt as it looked to me, but I know I didn't like the way he reacted the few times he was touched flush. Remember, Tyson was a different fighter when he got nailed and his confidence waned when his opponent experienced a little success against him. I'm not saying that's who Kovalev is by any means, but I am saying it's something to watch as his fights begin to go more rounds.

As of this writing I still believe Kovalev is the fighter to beat in the light heavyweight division. I would definitely pick him to beat Adonis Stevenson and Bernard Hopkins. However, I give Hopkins a better shot now to upset him than I did before because the things that bother Hopkins at this stage of his career, speed and work-rate, are not Kovalev's strength. Unlike Gennady Golovkin who he's recently been compared to, he's not as smart or as fluid nor does he cut off the ring quite as well. Golovkin has his vulnerabilities too but they're overshadowed more by his attributes and will be harder to exploit. Golovkin just hits you and hits you, whether or not he finds an opening. Kovalev waits around looking for his spots a little more, which leave an opening for an opponent who is good enough and not afraid to exploit it. What's most compelling about the trinity of Hopkins, Kovalev and Stevenson regarding the top of the food chain in the light heavyweight division is, there's a case that can be made favoring anyone of them over the other two. That's something that probably wouldn't be in play if Hopkins was crowding 40 years old instead of 50.

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Carmine Cas says:

And everything is hypothetical until the match is made, but I think Stevenson is quick enough to exploit some of Krusher's flaws

Skibbz says:

But what does Stevenson have other than the ability to use his left hand, and set it up well over a few rounds.

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The krusher's no fool. He's a patient killer, but once he smells blood he's faster than a shark to take you down. His combinations are good, his shots powerful and with Stevenson in front of him you know he's gonna come to cause real harm. He's no b*tch for Stevenson to slap. He's hungry and still hasn't got the pay he wants... Can the same be said for Stevenson?

He's got more than a mouthful of the good life and that's no good when your resume doesn't merit it. We'll see how he does with Fonfara. Would have been a nice prelude to the Kovalev fight, now we'll either get it in 2015 or we won't.

Kovalev is certainly not 3G, but nor does he try to be. He has flaws if you take him from a pure boxers angle, but if you look at what he is and how he goes about his own style. He's got the goods to take any opponent in the LH division out, bar one or two. Those being Ward when he moves up and Prof. Hopkins.

Anyone can taste the canvas when they're in the ring with the Krusher.

deepwater2 says:

Most have flaws. That's what makes it interesting. I like how he fought with two cuts after a bad low blow. He has heart

Carmine Cas says:

[QUOTE=Skibbz;47676]But what does Stevenson have other than the ability to use his left hand, and set it up well over a few rounds.

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Anyone can get it!

The Shadow says:

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A hard punch is like a nice rack. It gets your attention, it seduces you and it may even KNOCK YOU OUT, but once you get beyond the rack you will see exactly what you have.

Let him fight Pascal. Or even Carl Froch. That would be a cool fight, although he's much bigger than The Cobra, so maybe a bit unlikely.

How about Andre Dirrell? He's got the skill to make Kovalev look like a novice with 10 amateur fights. By he's also got the heart to crumble under the force.

Who'd you guys pick in that one?

deepwater2 says:

Didn't Andre dirrell roll on the floor and get dq win against Abraham after a low blow . Kovalev got a nut shot and went down but got back up and beat the hell out of the guy. Kovalev will catch up and beat up pascal. Froch has a granite chin so that would be interesting. Darnell Boone had a highlight reel one punch knockout against Stevenson . That punch was a triple D.

the Roast says:

That AA-Dirrell fight ended on a dq after AA hit Dirrell on the chin or in the back of the head when he was down from a slip I think Deep. It was not a nut shot.

deepwater2 says:

[QUOTE=the Roast;47791]That AA-Dirrell fight ended on a dq after AA hit Dirrell on the chin or in the back of the head when he was down from a slip I think Deep. It was not a nut shot.[/QUOTE]

Yeah I think your right. I just remember the dq part

The Good Doctor says:

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I think Stevenson throws cinder blocks especially with his left but I got a Randall Baileyish feeling about him. Power for days, decent chin, and if he lands one good shot it's often curtains. However, it appears to me that you are astute in your observation that all he does is try to set up the left. If you stay away from that, although much easier said than done, you can beat him.

Skibbz says:

[QUOTE=The Good Doctor;47800]I think Stevenson throws cinder blocks especially with his left but I got a Randall Baileyish feeling about him. Power for days, decent chin, and if he lands one good shot it's often curtains. However, it appears to me that you are astute in your observation that all he does is try to set up the left. If you stay away from that, although much easier said than done, you can beat him.[/QUOTE]

KO King he may be with that power, but as you pointed out so long as you steer clear of the left it'll make his life a whole lot more difficult. Would Kovalev be able to do that? In my opinion it remains to be seen but at least in Kovalev you have a fighter with venom in both hands, and the ability to string good combinations that leave their impression on his foe... As Shadow would say, like a nice rack!