

Maybe Next Time Provodnikov Will Let His Hands Go A Little More

Written by Frank Lotierzo
Monday, 16 June 2014 09:18



"The shots in the first round were the most powerful but they were few and far between."

And there you have it, the words of new WBO junior welterweight title holder Chris Algieri 20-0 (8) after his upset split decision win over former title holder Ruslan Provodnikov 23-3 (16) this past weekend.

Forget about who you thought won the fight or how you scored it. The bottom line is Provodnikov should've won. Perhaps he might've scored the stoppage and the worse case scenario should've been that he secured a conclusive unanimous decision. But he didn't finish. Instead, after really hurting Algieri and knocking him down twice in the first round, he basically sought to win the fight with one big finishing punch... and that was a colossal mistake.

Yes, Provodnikov was the aggressor throughout the entire 12-rounds and he also landed the harder punches. The problem was he didn't land enough of them to seal the deal. He left the barn door open and provided Algieri, who showed that he's an incredibly imaginative boxer and tough guy, an opening to rally back after he looked like a fighter on the cusp of accepting defeat. When you're an attacker like Provodnikov, you must let your hands go. Bringing the fight and applying bell-to-bell pressure isn't enough if you're not being effective and letting both hands go. And in all honesty, Ruslan didn't have many moments where he was extremely effective after the third round. He fell in love with his power and figured it was only a matter of time before Algieri would fade and he'd be able to deliver it. Only Algieri never really tired until the last round, and by then Provodnikov was desperate and looking to rescue the fight.

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Algieri's lateral movement to the left and right were almost non-stop. The few times his back touched the ropes, he fired a barrage of accurate punches at Provodnikov and fought his way out. No, he never hurt Ruslan or had him in trouble, but who says you have to do that in order to earn the decision? What he did do was stymie Provodnikov's aggression and forced him to break off the exchanges and have to reset while Algieri was piling up points. The only thing Provodnikov was effectively doing was forcing Algieri to rush his shots. Chris wasn't trying to hurt or get Provodnikov out of there. He was more concerned with occupying Provodnikov and giving himself room to cut loose and then get out without being handed a receipt, and he was very successful in doing that. And when Ruslan did manage to clip him with a big hook or right hand as the fight was progressing, it was usually on the elbows or picked off by Algieri's gloves.

I didn't see the fight live as it was happening in the moment, and for that reason my scoring of it doesn't count. Knowing the result before seeing the fight robs it of its drama. And the boxer always looks better during the replay because you know that he survived the puncher's assault and power. Had I been watching the fight live instead of a replay of it, I would've never thought Algieri could've sustained the pace and non stop punching and moving that he did. Algieri really mixed up his offense and combinations on the fly, and Provodnikov was the same every round. Chase and pursue but not enough activity and work-rate to win the decision without any question.

The fight was there for the taking and because Algieri couldn't really make Ruslan do much of what he didn't want to, Provodnikov only had to keep up the pressure and let his hands go. But every time Ruslan looked to push the fight Algieri answered back with beautiful three, four and five punch combinations and sometimes doing so while changing directions. No, his crisp punches didn't jar or hurt Provodnikov but they scored and a lot of times he didn't answer back. And that's how fighters lose decisions in close bouts.

After having a really big first round and putting Algieri down, Provodnikov was too sure of himself. He gave Algieri a chance to show everyone how tough and determined he was along with how well conditioned he was for the fight. In addition to that he boxed beautifully and exploited his only path to victory, and that was by boxing Provodnikov. Algieri knew early that fighting Provodnikov was never going to get him anything but knocked out. However, activity, constant movement and picking the right spots to really open up and fire when it appeared Provodnikov was going to try to assert himself, really stabilized the fight for him and won it in two of the judges' eyes.

Again, how I scored it after the fact doesn't count. The point is Provodnikov has no one to blame but himself for losing the decision because he allowed the fight to be so close on the

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scorecards. The fact that Algieri's right eye was blackened and swollen from the first round on made it appear that he was losing and being beaten up more than he was. And if Algieri was being worked over so completely by Provodnikov, he sure summoned great reserve in rallying back and making the fight so close, even if you don't think he pulled it out.

I'll say this, Chris Algieri showed enough against Provodnikov that whether he won or lost, I look forward to seeing him fight again. He's a tremendously conditioned fighter and he's as tough both mentally and physically as any fighter around. As for Provodnikov, there are definitely styles that he doesn't match up with and he can only do one thing, brawl and trade - and if that doesn't carry the day for him, he's stymied. Other than punching power, Algieri exhibited everything better that you could ask of a fighter. Once he wouldn't cooperate with Provodnikov, Ruslan only had his power and he just didn't deliver it enough to convince everybody that he was the better fighter. Remember, regardless of the fact that Algieri is the more complete fighter, the fight was there for Provodnikov and he should've won it. For whatever reason he couldn't or wouldn't finish, and Algieri took full advantage of the opening he was given.

Lastly, Provodnikov also hurt himself in terms of his image. It's much harder to see him as a killer now, or as a guy who'll do anything to win. Ruslan traded off of being a take-no-prisoners killer, but it's hard to see him in that light now. Especially after he couldn't seize a fight from a fighter who only punched hard enough to barely bother him and whose eye was swelling more with each passing round, yet he kept firing and letting his hands go, refusing to submit to the stronger and more powerful fighter.

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oubobcat says:

I thought Provodnikov's big issue in this fight was the lack of a jab.

When he did throw the jab, it would land and set up power shots for him. If he threw it with more consistency, he would have landed more scoring blows and set up more power punching combinations.

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How many times do we see it where success early haunts a fighter later? Provodnikov battered Algieri in round one and put him down twice. Provodnikov thought "boy I have it easy" and forgot how to set up his punches. He figured I'll just walk in and finish things off. He abandoned his plan for what he hoped would be an easy nights work. When Algieri started having success, Provodnikov just kept trying for that one equalizer to change the course of the fight like what happened in round one.

As I take time to digest what happened, I think this could actually help lead Provodnikov to becoming a better fighter down the line. He has the right teacher in Freddie Roach who will tell him where he went wrong and what not to do again. The relentlessness is still there and the mistakes are correctable. If Provodnikov heeds the advice of those teaching him, this may actually turn out as a blessing in disguise.

thegreyman says:

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Provodnikov definitely needs to work on getting in, to set up those big shots, and I thought that if anyone could, Roach would teach him that. He needs to learn to close down the range better. He's a short guy, and if he doesn't learn this, then he'll always come up short against rangy fighters, and guys that know how to move behind their jab.

Hopefully we'll see an improvement in this area in the next fight.

Perhaps a bigger issue for Provodnikov though, is his lack of body shots. He started out well in round one, banging to the body, so it's obviously something Roach has instructed him to do, but after the knockdown, he just went head-hunting. Algieri was repeatedly asking for a right to the body when he was covering up and moving to his left- and if Provodnikov had delivered it then I think the night would have been much shorter.

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brownsugar says:

Provodnikov was his old self until about the third round. I had the impression that he regressed after Algieri defiantly refused to fold , stand toe-to-toe and " fight like a man" ... as the sluggers like to put it.

provodnikov did not give the impression of somebody who wanted to win. " or die trying ".

Frustrated.... Despondent, and complacent is the best way I can describe his dreary performance.

I could have cursed him (and probably did as he allowed my perfect prediction to disinigrate right before my eyes) I remember hitting the delete button on the dvr just as the moose-liver-lovin' loser was completing his interview.

How dare he give up to the long island nutritionist and novice part time boxer?. Maybe not give up ...but he definitely couldn't get untracked.

I guess Algieri was a big part of the equation...he may not have put too much of a physical beating on " Rocky"... But mentally Provodnikov was befuddled and exhausted... It'll take a couple of months before they can brainwash him and pump up his ego enough to ask for a rematch... Hopefully we don't have to watch it againn... Leave Algieri to the sharpshooters.

Radam G says:

Wow! Another one of TSS's Archmaster Scribe F-Lo's masterpieces. And weaving and heaving it with sweet science's mad luv. And I can ride with it without bytching. From not understand what I believe was a robbery, I'm no longer iching.

That was one awesome pugilistic journalistic scratch! Holla!