Written by Eric Raskin Tuesday, 05 July 2011 19:14



Well, the heavyweight championship showdown between Wladimir Klitschko and David Haye is in the books, and it was so compelling that I'm going to start this week's column by answering an email about ... Lucian Bute:

### Eric,

Have you heard that Bute is calling out Pavlik? After Pavlik was dominated by Hopkins three years ago, TKO'd by Martinez, went through rehab, and struggled against an ordinary boxer in his last fight, now Bute wants him. Bute has looked good against his recent opponents, but they are all very limited. How far is Bute from "fraud" status?

#### —Steve the Greek

### Steve,

Good to hear from one of my favorite boxing-loving Canadians. And nobody can accuse you of being a homer, as you're coming down hard on "your boy" Bute. Before I get to the heart of your comment, a quick correction: Martinez did not TKO Pavlik. With the help of a cut, he beat him by decision in a competitive fight. In retrospect, that loss doesn't really count as a strike against Pavlik.

As for Bute, yes, his opposition has been soft, but by virtue of his exclusion from the Super Six, his options have been limited. All of the best fighters in the division other than him have had tournament obligations for the past two years. So it's hard to claim he's ducking anyone. Especially because, by all accounts, he wanted to fight Mikkel Kessler next and it was Kessler who avoided what I believe would be a likely one-sided defeat by turning down the fight.

All things considered, I think Pavlik is a reasonable choice of opponent. Yes, his name value probably exceeds his actual pugilistic stock at the moment. But finding advantageous risk-reward ratios is a time-honored tradition in boxing. I'd make Bute the clear favorite, but I don't think he'd beat Pavlik with ease. Sure, I'd rather see Kelly shake off the rust with one or two more tune-ups first. Still, if Bute-Kessler can't be made, Bute-Pavlik is a fine substitute.

To me, the word "fraud" doesn't apply to Bute. He's certainly less proven than Andre Ward or Carl Froch, and that's why they're both currently ranked ahead of him at super middle in any

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objective ratings. But he's the number-three guy at the moment, he's beaten a couple of decent fighters, he's only had one fight that made him appear "exposed" as something less than he was purported to be (the first Librado Andrade fight), and he is a talented fighter in my opinion. I'm willing to give him a little more time before facing the toughest tests. He can wait for the Super Six to finish, call out the winner, and then we'll see what happens. But for now, he's no more a fraud than Joe Calzaghe was a few years into his title reign, and we know how that turned out.

Okay, it's Rants time. And I suppose I have to address this Klitschko-Haye thing:

- This was pretty much the worst-case scenario for boxing and for fans' hopes of having something to look forward to in the heavyweight division. It's not Klitschko winning that was such a disaster (though Haye winning would have opened up more appealing future possibilities); it's Klitschko winning without doing anything memorable. And yes, it's the same old story on that front. But I'd hoped one or both fighters would sense that this fight meant more than others and was being viewed by a larger audience than others and would seize the day. In the end, neither seized much of anything.
- I saw a couple of people refer to this as "the best win of Klitschko's career." If that's true (and I don't believe it is—how quickly we forget two dominant victories over a highly rated Chris Byrd), then doesn't that say everything that needs to be said about why Wladimir's tenure at the top has been unfulfilling?
- Even though he won handily, Klitschko still looked shaky and vulnerable in spots. Against a semi-decent heavyweight like Haye, I came away more convinced than ever that Wladimir would be in serious trouble against any elite heavyweight from the past 50 years. Vitali might be a different story, with his awkward style and reliable chin. But Wladimir? While he's among the top two of his terrible era, I'm not so sure he would have ranked among the top five in the '90s era or the '70s era. One fellow writer on Twitter called him an "ATG." If that stands for "all-time good," I agree wholeheartedly.
- I couldn't help but notice that in HBO's excellent opening to the broadcast (the edited piece that preceded the World Championship Boxing theme song), there wasn't one mention of Vitali. HBO was building up the significance of this fight, and of course, the existence of Vitali detracts from that.
- Okay, time to rip Haye a little bit. You know what a fighter with a broken toe should do? Don't move too much, come forward, throw some bombs against the chinny champion, and see what happens. Basically, he should have done ... exactly what we all said he should have done even when we thought he had 10 healthy toes. Haye proved in the first few rounds that he was actually a credible opponent in terms of ability, but he was not a credible opponent in terms of willingness to do the things he needed to do in order to have a chance of winning.
- And, really David, what the \$%&@ were you doing raising your hand just before Mike Buffer announced who those three scorecards favored?

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- Something to think about: Would Haye have pulled out of the fight with a broken toe three weeks ago if he hadn't already put his reputation on probation with the pullout last year?
- All is not lost, David Haye. Your modeling career will hit the stratosphere should either surgical booties or shiny silver capes become en vogue.
- Here's how you know Klitschko-Haye was a fight for which it was easy to pick a winner: Even Teddy Atlas couldn't bring himself to predict the upset.
- Can't say I'm shocked to hear that Paul Williams is contemplating retirement. His process for selecting a comeback opponent felt like an aging cop in his final week on the job doing everything possible not to have to put on the bulletproof vest.
- Can't say I'm shocked to hear that Jermain Taylor is coming back. He's a fighter.
- Excellent observation last week by Editor Mike about how Floyd Mayweather is starting to look his age facially. On a related note, Floyd makes Sidney Crosby look like Tom Selleck in the moustache-growing department.
- I'm definitely curious to see the Mayweather-Victor Ortiz episode of Face Off With Max Kellerman—if for no other reason than to find out which phony personality each participant decided to use.
- Rest in peace, Bouie Fisher. Bouie is on that short list of people about whom nobody has a bad word to say (except maybe Bernard Hopkins, but everybody gets on Bernard's bad side at some point, right?). Anyway, it was pleasing to learn the day before Bouie died that he and Bernard had mended fences. And Fisher's legacy as a trainer will live on every remaining time that we get to see Hopkins take some younger, more athletic fighter to school.
- I'm setting the over/under line on the quality of Kimbo Slice's boxing career at "Dustin Diamond."
- I don't know who that Brian Kenny guy was that ESPN2 had in the studio this week, but he was really good at that job. Let's hope we see more of him.
- Speaking of guys I'd like to see more of, Sebastian Lujan remains one of my favorite under-the-radar badasses in boxing.
- Ring Theory (http://ringtheory.podbean.com) returns this week after a mini-vacation, with special guest Al Bernstein of Showtime and BoxingChannel.tv joining me and Bill Dettloff. I'm almost as giddy about having Al on as I am about announcing the updated scores of my Quick Picks competition with Dettloff. It's only a matter of time before Bill starts claiming to be making predictions with a broken pinky toe.

Eric Raskin can be contacted at RaskinBoxing@yahoo.com. You can follow him on Twitter @EricRaskin and listen to new episodes of his podcast, Ring Theory, at <a href="http://ringtheory.podbe">http://ringtheory.podbe</a>

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# the Roast says:

LOL Dustin Diamond!! I would agree that the best thing to come from Wlad-Haye was the silver cape. I have got to get one of those.