

All Due Respect George Peterson, But We Need To See If Long Tall Paul Is All There...WOODS

Written by Michael Woods
Wednesday, 06 July 2011 15:56



Peterson says this isn't a comeback. Williams said he knows he's the same fighter he was. OK. But viewers will still tune in to see if the Martinez KO lingers. (Hogan)

You might have heard, his last time out, Paul Williams was knocked out.

KTFO, actually.

It was conclusive, it was swift, it was severe, it was the KO of the year for 2010. Sergio Martinez' left hand sent Long Tall Paul to the mat in Atlantic City face first, arms splayed out, woozy, done for the night.

That happened on November 20, and LTP has been asked about that moment again and again and again since then. We keyboard tappers can be pesky like that. We can occasionally go overboard concentrating on the negative, focusing on recent, somewhat catastrophic events, instead of summing up a fighter's career as a whole, seeing an event in context.

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Some of us, and some message boarders, might have gone a bit overboard in proclaiming Williams exposed, in theorizing that perhaps he'd be damaged goods from that moment on.

So I asked Williams, who was in town for a press luncheon at the Palm West in NYC on Wednesday, is it annoying having people remind you about being knocked out all the time?

"I'm really laid back, it doesn't bother me, it let's me know that they've been watching me, I turn the negative into the positive," said Williams, who turns 30 on July 27.

Good enough. Any person is wise to turn negatives into positives, if at all possible.

So I followed up with LTP, and asked if he had any question in his mind that maybe something was taken from him on Nov. 20, if perhaps he worried his chin was fatally compromised?

LTP didn't get a chance to respond. His trainer-manager George Peterson hopped in. "Any time, anybody can get knocked out if the punch lands the right way. If anybody doesn't understand that, they got to get out of the business. Because that can happen, to anybody, and I know they've seen that. So to ask a question like that, a person asks a question like that, he's got to understand his limits."

I pressed on, asking Peterson if he thinks the fightwriters are too quick to write a guy off after a loss. Promoter Dan Goossen had referenced that earlier, talking about how everyone, all the great fighters, all the great teams, lose, and he thinks it's a shame some are so quick to toss them to the scrap heap. "They are limited," Peterson continued, "they're limited in their understanding. It pisses you off, because people think they represent some expertise...that pisses me off."

I asked Peterson if he objected to my questions, and he indicated that he thought the line of questioning was off base. I told him that I ask because I don't know. There is a perception, I'd argue a viable one, that occasionally, a devastating one punch KO can alter a fighter. Mentally, and physically. Peterson indicated that this was not so, or at least, not a possibility with his guy, and that my question was sort of stupid.

Good for him. Peterson's doing his job. Pesky mutts like me needle the fighter, ask him if he's still up to the task. In that, I'm doing my job.

So, I continued with Peterson, there was/is no need to "build Williams back up," to help him settle himself, and assess how much if at all the KO took out of him?

"He never went anywhere," Peterson said. (During the press conference, the occasionally gruff Peterson grumbled that his man had been dissed and dismissed prematurely. "Paul Williams is not dead, there has been no funeral," he said. "I don't like the term 'comeback.'...All the greats lose. It's not a comeback, just a continuation.") "Does he look like the same guy to you?"

Yes, outwardly. But inside, we don't know. Don't know about the wiring in the chin and brain, which isn't even fully understood by neurosurgeons. Don't know if there's any doubt lingering in

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LTP's mind, whether he will be a bit gun shy. That's where the drama is. Cuban foe Erislandy Lara, he of the 310-10 amateur record, may not help us answer that, but I know he'll try. The southpaw has a 15-0-1 mark, with 10 KOs, and had stopped four straight opponents before drawing in his last scrap, against Carlos Molina on March 25. He didn't draw rave reviews for that bout, which ran on ESPN's Friday Night Fights. He has a tendency to be one and done when he gets tired, or drifts mentally, and not pile up combos, and LTP might simply swarm him, beat him with volume. The 6-1 LTP should be able to leverage his height and reach edge on the 5-9 Lara, who will probably look a weight class smaller than Williams in AC.

Williams told me that he'd like to fight two more fights, this one against Lara, and then a tiebreaker with Sergio Martinez next. LTP, who called himself an "old lion" during the PC, said he wanted Martinez this fight, and wasn't sure why that didn't happen. He said he'll rely on Al Haymon, and Team Martinez and HBO to figure out the timing on that one. Williams started boxing at 17, and is looking forward to concentrating on business, which included real estate holdings.

I give props to Team Williams for not stepping in against a steppingstone cooperator in his first fight back, this will be a competitive fight.

SPEEDBAG WBA super bantam champ Akifumi Shimoda meets Rico Ramos on the AC undercard. The Japanese fighter came to the lunch with a surgical mask on his face. That is a common practice in Japan, his translator Nobu Ikushi told me, especially when someone has a bug or is allergic to things. No, bettors, Shimoda doesn't have a bug, he said, he is just taking precaution against germs.

---Chris Arreola drew laughs when he asked everyone to get their tickets, and get HBO to tune in. Then, he added parenthetically, he used to steal cable.