

A Note On Gennady Golovkin vs. Gabriel Rosado

Written by Thomas Hauser
Wednesday, 23 January 2013 10:22



“How do you fight someone you cannot beat?”

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Hamilton Nolan of Deadspin posed that question not long ago and answered, "You simply do your best. That's all that can be done. You cannot win, but you can try your very best. Some people are more suited to this task than others."

Gabriel Rosado is suited to the task.

Rosado, age 27, fights out of Philadelphia. When he entered the ring at Madison Square Garden's Theater to face WBA 160-pound champion Gennady Golovkin on January 19th, Gabriel's record stood at 21 wins and 5 losses with 13 knockouts and 1 KO by.

Rosado looks like the leader of a biker gang. He's heavily tattooed over virtually every part of his chest and arms with artwork on his neck for good measure. The images include Jesus on the cross, boxing gloves, a tiger, the Puerto Rican flag, quotes from the Bible, and a pit-bull wearing handwraps.

"My mother hates it," Gabriel admits. "She cries every time I come home with a new one."

The losses on Rosado's ledger are explained in part by the fact that he had only eleven amateur fights and, until recently, held a fulltime manual-labor job.

Golovkin, by contrast, had more than three hundred amateur fights in his native Kazakhstan. He won a silver medal at the 2004 Olympics and a World Amateur Boxing Championship the year before. At age thirty with a young face and soft gentle demeanor, he doesn't look like a fighter. But he fights like one.

Golovkin is undefeated in the professional ranks. He has good balance, a good chin, and has never been knocked down as an amateur or pro. He also has heavy hands. Twenty-two of his 25 victories for pay have come by way of knockout.

If someone saw Golovkin and Rosado at a staredown and knew nothing about either man,

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someone's money would be on Rosado. Someone would be wrong. Fighters at the elite level don't get there by accident.

Given the politics of boxing, Rosado had become the #1 challenger for Cornelius Bundrage's IBF 154-pound crown. He relinquished that opportunity to fight Golovkin on HBO.

"I like taking chances," Rosado said of his decision. "I dare to be great."

He also liked the fact that he stood to make good money fighting Golovkin on HBO as opposed to waiting around for a smaller purse against Bundrage in a bout that might never materialize.

Ron Stander was a heavyweight club fighter from Council Bluffs, Iowa, who was given a shot against Joe Frazier in 1972, took many shots in return, and was knocked out by Smokin' Joe in the fourth round. Before the bout, Stander's wife, Darlene, presciently noted, "You don't take a Volkswagen into the Indianapolis 500 unless you know a shortcut."

Rosado came in against Golovkin with the proper mindset. But he was competing against a different class of car. Or as former WBO heavyweight champion Lamon Brewster observed after disposing of hopelessly overmatched 309-pound Joe Lenhardt, "It's like when you look at a lion and he's about to eat you. It's not about what you're thinking. It's what the lion is thinking."

There's a line between confidence and wishful thinking. The overwhelming pre-fight sentiment was that Gabriel wasn't coming to lose but would. Golovkin-Rosado shaped up as a contest between a straight-ahead brawler and a fighter who could box better, hit harder, and take a better punch.

On fight night, Rosado's dreams quickly turned into a nightmare. The bout began with Golovkin coming out hard to establish dominance early and Gabriel in uncharacteristic retreat. Gennady fights with the confidence of a man who has never been on the canvas, and that translates into relentless aggression. Rosado had his moments. But when he hit Golovkin cleanly, which happened from time to time, Gennady walked through the punches. It was the hunter versus the hunted.

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Midway through round two, Rosado was cut on the left eyelid. By round four, he was bleeding from the nose and his face looked like raw steak. He fought bravely and as well as he could. But there was too much mega-tonnage in the champion's arsenal.

It was a brutal beatdown. As the bout wore on, the cut around Rosado's eye worsened and the ring doctors began visiting his corner on a regular basis. Gabriel kept pleading to be allowed to continue. He fought bravely and as well as he could. But halfway through the scheduled twelve rounds, he looked as though he'd been on the receiving end of a grenade attack. He was being beaten up, badly. At the 2:46 mark of round seven, trainer Billy Briscoe wisely threw in the towel. Golovkin won every minute of every round.

Gennady now has a string of twelve consecutive knockouts and is widely regarded as the second-best middleweight in the world. The first best (Sergio Martinez) has shown little interest in fighting him. If there's a fly in the ointment, it's that Golovkin still hasn't fought a world class fighter.

As for Rosado; he's definitely worth seeing again. Unlike many of the fighters who now receive large checks courtesy of the boxing establishment, he's willing to go in tough and he comes to fight every time out. Despite taking horrific punishment against Golovkin, he never went down.

Golovkin-Rosado was a lesson in courage, determination, and the brutal realities of prizefighting. In a just world, Gabriel's next fight would be against an opponent he has a more realistic chance of beating. For example, Cornelius Bundrage.

Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thouser@rcn.com. His most recent book (*And the New: An Inside Look at Another Year in Boxing*) was published by the University of Arkansas Press.

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Radam G says:

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Nice, witty piece! And I guess everybodee and dey momma expect that from the one and only TH. Holla!

deepwater says:

Any boxer that shapes and waxes his eyebrows before a fight is a fool. It's a guarantee that the fight will end on cuts.

brownsugar says:

Great Article.... this writer has much discernment.

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Buzz Murdock says:

The first time I saw Golovkin fight, he reminded me of Julio Chavez Sr. Rosado hit him more than a few times, and made his aggression seem somewhat vulnerable. His face didn't cut, but it lumped up...The harsh glare of the stagelight may take more out of Golovkin than his 200 amateur fights. I'm sure he hits hard, and crisp as hell, but pedigree don't always take you all the way in the pros/then again he's got HBO...modest choir-boys are very marketable

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brownsugar says:

I watched the fight again,... Rosado did touch GGG up a little... but he was traveling in reverse with so much urgency, I thought he was trying to build up enough momentum to try a Reverse Triple Axel. GGG's high pressure approach was consistant and defensive at the same time. Rosado whiffed enough punches trying to hit GGG on the way in, he could have put out the candles on at least several dozen birthday cakes. The wind Rosado was generating from missed punches is probably reason GGG didn't get gassed.. following a portable fan in the ring does have it's benefits. I thought GGG did the best he could against a boxer who only came to survive... Yes he had heart.... enough heart to get in the ring with a killer and see how long he could last. I've scene Andre Ward get scuffed up, knocked down and tested by lesser boxers too... it goes with the territory.....Rosado will be a handful against anyone else... against TripleG it was only a matter of time... he was never truly in the fight.

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