

Will We See Sergey Kovalev-Bernard Hopkins?

Written by Michael Woods
Tuesday, 18 June 2013 20:31



Did you see Sergey Kovalev do his thing on Friday night, on NBC Sports Network, on a Main Events card?

The guy looked like a bit of a beast, a hammerfisted terminator type who seems like the sort who could fight 50 rounds, and would come after you looking to knock your block off in every minute of every round.

OK, he wasn't fighting Bernard Hopkins, he was fighting Houstonian Cornelius White, a man

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whose best win is over Yordanis Despaigne, and who lost to Don George in 2011 (TKO1). Nevertheless, you didn't have to be the sunniest of optimists to watch Kovalev and like his upside, a lot.

So when word came down that the IBF talked about it, and decided to install Kovalev as their No. 1 guy at light heavy, and order, or ask, IBF light heavy champ Bernard Hopkins to fight the Russian-born boxer in a mandatory title defense, I was kind of pumped.

Who wouldn't like that scrap, seeing if the 48-year-old Hopkins could defuse another bomber, if he could render someone Pavlik-d once again? Kovalev would be an immense step up from Karo Murat, who was set to be Hopkins' mandatory defense on July 13, before visa issues made it impossible for him to come to Brooklyn from Germany, and scrubbed the whole card.

So, will Hopkins take the challenge? He was keen to do as the IBF requested when his mandatory was Murat; Kovalev is a different animal. Will Hopkins still see that belt as a needed bargaining chip, an enticer, a door opener? Or does he see Kovalev and think, Nah, I'm ageless, but not crazy. That guy isn't the right style for me right now.

I reached out to John David Jackson, the ex junior middle and middleweight champ who trains Kovalev, and used to work in Hopkins' corner, as well.

"It's on Bernard," he told me. "Does he want the fight? Probably not. But if he wants the title he has no choice. Will he take the fight? From a warriors' perspective I think he'll take it, what other options does he have? If he vacates then his bargaining chip is no longer there. From a danger point of view, it's not the fight he wants, but at this point he can't pick and choose."

What about Nathan Cleverly, I asked. He doesn't have the pop Kovalev does and while he's a volume guy, Hopkins might rather try his luck with the man from Wales who holds the WBO 175-pound strap. JDJ agreed that Hopkins might pick that route over the Kovalev avenue. I think he knows how Hopkins thinks...the ex champ sparred with Hopkins starting in 1990, and was in his corner from the 2006 Antonio Tarver fight until the 2010 Roy Jones fight. Oh, and he took on Hopkins, in 1997, and dropped a TKO7 to the Philly ace. Jackson fought just twice more after that.

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"Other than (late long-time trainer) Bouie Fisher I know him better than anyone," Jackson said. "He's always been good to me, I have nothing but respect for him." So, would he take the Kovalev fight if he were Hopkins? "I don't want to see Hopkins get hurt, he hasn't had a real hard fight in years. Kovalev is a lot different. He punches in bunches. Hopkins can't go against this man, this young gun, he doesn't have the ammo to keep him off of him.

"Hopkins picked the right guys recently, Pascal is nothing to brag about, Chad Dawson beat him, and he beat Tavoris Cloud, hats off to him...but his best days are behind him."

So, what would Kovalev do to Bernard? Knock him out? "I can see that happening, but I think it would be stopped before that," the trainer said. "I have no ill feelings toward Hopkins, I don't want to see him get hurt, but this is the business were in. You see young versus old and he's the old now.

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Carmine Cas says:

It would def be an entertaining fight

Raiders says:

[QUOTE=deepwater;32257]Yes it would, I want to see if Hopkins can hold of the young fresh guy but who is paying for it? what \$\$ does kovalev have behind him?[/QUOTE]

Kovalev got nothing behind him, he's co main eventing NBC Sports shows, I think his best shot is to let Hopkins run everything and just show up and fight, if B-Hop wants he can vacate and the only thing Kovalev will gain is a vacant title.

Raiders says:

That would be fair