

Andre Ward: There's Nobody Out There Like Him Today

Written by Frank Lotierzo

Friday, 15 November 2013 12:09



It's Wednesday afternoon any date and you walk into a boxing gym and see 25 year old Cassius Clay/Muhammad Ali shadow box and then work a heavy bag. It wouldn't take long to realize that not many boxers can do it with the speed, power, fluidity and as effortlessly as he does. Without being an astute boxing observer even you would know that you were watching an extremely skilled and gifted fighter. Ditto the same perceptions and thoughts if you were privy to witnessing an in prime Sugar Ray Leonard or Roy Jones do the same things. It wouldn't take long to conclude you were looking at skill and talent that isn't seen throughout many boxing gyms world wide. There are a couple other fighters that the same could be said about, but I figured I'd keep it to fighters that everyone reading this has seen.

Greatly skilled and gifted fighters come along once in a generation and that even might be too liberal of a statement. However, there is another fighter who comes along who is every bit as rare and special as the super-athletically gifted fighter. He's viewed as the cerebral fighter who is above average in the skill and strength department, who thinks and plots in the ring with the same precision as a Navy Seal team. Today there are actually three fighters who can make the cut: Bernard Hopkins, Floyd Mayweather and Andre Ward.

If you don't know, fighters steal things regarding their style and game from each other. Leonard stole from Ali and Jones stole aspects of his game from both of them. The same applies to Mayweather who stole some ring strategies from Hopkins and Ward stole from both of them, and that's a good thing. Ward has added his own ingenuity to what he pilfered from Bernard and Floyd. His offense is more imaginative than Hopkins' and he's more formidable than Mayweather when he chooses to or sees the need to push the fight and initiate the exchanges.

Fighters talk about entering the ring with a plan, but nobody today does it to the -enth degree like Andre Ward. Ward studies his opponents and his first order of business before the bell sounds for round one is to make it a priority that his opponent fights his fight when and where in the ring he's deems it to be in Ward's best interest. Andre's biggest assets are him being super versatile and deceivingly strong willed and physically strong. Ward uses his feet to pivot and turn fighters who try to pressure and take it to him. He does sort of a T-step to nullify their attack/rush and in the process opens up a path for him to either move out of range or counter

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attack. Another thing he does great, especially on the inside is, he gets to his opponents blind side. When I say blind side I mean he picks a side to where his opponents head and body are exposed for him to hit - yet for them to hit him they have to punch across their body (making it impossible to hit with power) with their back hand. Nobody perfected this art as terrifically as the late Hector Camacho did. No, Andre doesn't slide and glide around the ring like Ali or Camacho did, but his feet are a very important part of his offense and defense.

Something else Ward does that's never mentioned is how he sees the whole body of his opponent as a target. He doesn't just head hunt or try to kill the core body, he hits the parts of his opponents body that they use to defend with, mainly their arms and shoulders. Ward also jabs to the body as a strategy. Jabbing to the body accomplishes two things, a) it momentarily disrupts and blunts the opponents' aggression and leaves them with nothing to counter and b) it's a body shot that's almost always there. Mayweather never jabs to the body and Hopkins only does it when he's trying to buy time and looking to figure his opponent out. Ward uses it as a tool to set up his opponent for other counters and feints. He'll use it as a strategy to get their hands down or impede their aggression... and it works.

Andre Ward 26-0 (14) is a rare fighter who uses his entire body as a weapon. He uses his legs and feet to get into position to make his opponent miss so he can counter or to place himself in the ideal position to where he can attack and cannot be successfully countered. When trying to decipher what his better hand is or what his most effective punch is, take your pick. When he needs to jab to set up his offense, he can do it, yet he can also use the jab to disrupt his opponents' aggression and pressure when the need arises. Inside he manages to keep both hands free so he can hook and uppercut from either side regardless of what's coming back at him. His right hand is very versatile and he's really terrific at blocking and countering with it. He also hooks with it and comes over the top with it when his opponent is cornered or against the ropes.

As of this writing Andre Ward is probably the most difficult fighter to fight and game plan for. He has an abundance of physical skill, no he's not Leonard or Jones, but he's gifted enough that his physical being is something his opponent has to address. If you try to bring the fight to him, and you're not a puncher like Bob Foster or an attacker the likes of Joe Frazier or Roberto Duran, he'll literally pluck your attack weapons away one by one and piece by piece. If you try to circle in an attempt to get him to follow so you can out box him, you better have wheels and speed the likes of Ali and Jones, or else you'll run into a stop sign with fist three or four times a round, which will make you wish you were somewhere else.

If you're Edwin Rodriguez 24-0 (16) this weekend and about to fight Andre Ward, you better

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have done your homework. You better know every inch of that ring and be prepared to see a fighter come at you that seems like he has four hands and legs, one who will do everything in his power to make you do everything you don't want to at the exact time and place you don't want to do it. If you think you can just take it to him and win, by the end of the third round you'll think you were trying to knock out a bed sheet hanging over a clothes line. And like Hopkins and Mayweather, Ward has no qualms about bending the rules if it'll help him get the job done. He can be very rough on the inside.

Andre Ward has perfected the basics of boxing and sprinkled them with old school deception and trickery. If you want to see a true boxing scholar at work in a boxing ring, check him out Saturday night.

Frank Lotierzo can be contacted at GlovedFist@Gmail.com

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miguel1 says:

Rigondeaux?

miguel1 says:

and he has been labelled boring as well, I would include Rigondeaux with his major ammie background as another...

The Shadow says:

I see someone has been watching In This Corner. Nice one, Frank, hehehehehe.

[url]http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=26HwQHCCzYs

And yes, Miguel, Rigo definitely is in that category. He just hasn't had a chance to prove it yet against a variety of world class opposition so it's hard for people to see. (I think Frank knows this also. And the inclusion of Rigo doesn't fit the thesis if this piece so I understand.)

He went straight to the top dog for which he's now given little credit. Rigo can think with the best of them. People will see in time as he gets the opportunity to disarm guys like Mares,

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Salido, Lomachenko and others.

Remember, Rigo can actually fight just as well orthodox. He just doesn't because fighting southpaw is technically an advantage.

He's the truth. If I have seen reputable guys -- Freddie Roach, Mike Tyson, Olympic gold medalists and others -- call him the greatest talent ever.

One two-time Olympic champion and a rival of his calls him the greatest boxer who ever lived. Those type of unbiased expert comments speak volumes.

stormcentre says:

Good article Frank.

At the risk of coming across a little pedantic (as I have written a few pointed and detailed posts lately) your comment

"[I]Nobody perfected this art as terrifically as the late Hector Camacho did[I]"

May be in need of revision.

Check out the scarlet pimpernel Naseem Hamed's style my friend.

He was around the left side, hanging off their shoulder and punching them out before they processed any movement.

But yes, Andre is a 1st class operator of the art, and I won't be surprised to see him OK Rodriguez.

stormcentre says:

[QUOTE=The Shadow;40037]I see someone has been watching In This Corner. Nice one, Frank, hehehehehe. [url]http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=26HwQHCCzYs

And yes, Miguel, Rigo definitely is in that category. He just hasn't had a chance to prove it yet against a variety of world class opposition so it's hard for people to see. (I think Frank knows this also. And the inclusion of Rigo doesn't fit the thesis if this piece so I understand.)

He went straight to the top dog for which he's now given little credit. Rigo can think with the best of them. People will see in time as he gets the opportunity to disarm guys like Mares, Salido, Lomachenko and others.

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The comment about this and that you made in my other GGG post about Rigo Yes, you're right.

Rigo was kept away from Manny at the WC gym.

However, the new Eastern Bloc boy Top Rank has signed may give Rigo something to think about.

That boy, if he chooses, has more angles than a geometry set.

Cheers,

Konstantin Tszyu

stormcentre says:

Oh Franksorry but . . .

[I]"Mayweather never jabs to the body"[/I]
Your not serious are you!

Check out Lee Wylie's articles and photographs that detail (some of) how Mayweather uses his left.

Come on man!

Bernie Campbell says:

Pipe down the promotiom germs! Were not talking Jack Dempsey yet! May I remind you about the legend of Anthony "Tony" Conigliaro? Read your history clownies!

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Pipe down the promotiom germs! Were not talking Jack Dempsey yet! May I remind you about the legend of Anthony "Tony" Conigliaro? Read your history clownies!

stormcentre says:

Actually, come to think of it Frank.

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You can do better and this website and it's posters deserve better.

It appears that you didn't even proof read your (others?) work.

And if you did, then that's even worse.

Here's why. How could Ward have stolen a long left jab to the stomach from Floyd Mayweather (as the video you took your piece from to which the Shadow has pasted its URL clearly shows Ward saying); if Mayweather never used it?

Sloppy stuff, in several ways, my friend.

How about some detail on why and where Ward thinks the "Philly Crab" fighting-style will work?

The Shadow says:

[QUOTE=stormcentre;40060]The comment about this and that you made in my other GGG post about Rigo Yes, you're right.

Rigo was kept away from Manny at the WC gym.

However, the new Eastern Bloc boy Top Rank has signed may give Rigo something to think about.

That boy, if he chooses, has more angles than a geometry set.[/QUOTE]

You think Lomachenko can pose a threat? I really don't see any special effects with this guy. He's technically sound and has decent athleticism.

You say his gifts are his angles? I'd like to hear a breakdown. I was really struggling to see how this guy could go almost 400-1. That's beyond comprehension, an amazing feat. (I'll get back to you on the other thread later...and I see your edit, hehehehe)

The way it looks now, though, I think he gets schooled by Rigo.

You're right, Storm, and I wasn't going to say anything. That he doesn't jab to the stomach is silly. I caught that, too. Ward says he stole that in the same link that obviously inspired this piece. Broner took that move from Floyd, too.

I agree, I'd like to hear some insights into Ward's defense, as well. Tricky fighter, that guy.

stormcentre says:

This is the thing with these Russian/Ukraine fighters that come through the amateur program . . .

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They don't always look like they're smooth operators in the same way the Cubans and Americans can.

But Lomachenko can boogie. I am not sure whether he can hang with Rigo though, but I suspect that Arum and his management know how to spot special talent when they see it by now.

Remember Arum promoted Ali years ago, Oscar, Floyd, Cotto, Pacman, and the list goes on . . . so he's been in the (talent spotting) game a while.

Aside from using Lomachenko and his nationality ties to break into other markets, I think Arum wants to burn Rigo but hates the thought that he doesn't have someone good enough to do it. Arum probably hoped Donaire would do it, but instead Rigo got pushed a bit but mostly played with him.

And, in case you haven't noticed Big Bad Bob doesn't like to lose too many arguments or battles. Look what he did to Gamboa for not fighting Rios even though there was no contract.

My money is on the fact that Arum currently believes Lomachenko is his best bet to economically and physically hurt Rigo.

Lomachenko is pretty good. I can't remember who they're lining up for him next, but I think it is a decent step up and a good fight.

stormcentre says:

[QUOTE=The Shadow;40078]I'd like to hear some insights into Ward's defense, as well. Tricky fighter, that guy.[/QUOTE]

Well, it's basically a cross between all I have written about Kostya Tszyu's extended left hand, the Philly Crab and Floyd Mayweather's shoulder roll.

The video "In This Corner" that "inspired" our author Frank pretty much says it all.

You can block, parry, distract, blind, create openings and move a guy; all with the "stick" or extended left hand/arm.

Now name me another boxing punch or move that has all those advantages?

Even the shoulder roll defence doesn't. It's limitation is a restriction with some offensive moves and slight predictability.

stormcentre says:

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[/QUOTE]

Here's a little insight to Vasyl Lomachenko and his notable amateur wins.

a) Vasyl Lomachenko's 1st Silver Medal; 2007 World Amateur Boxing Championship Competition.

b) Vasyl Lomachenko's 1st Gold Medal; 2008 Beijing Olympics. He beat 5 opponents for a combined score of 58:13; which is an incredible margin for amateur boxing, particularly at that level of competition.

c) Vasyl Lomachenko's 2nd Gold Medal; 2009 World Amateur Boxing Championship Competition.

d) Vasyl Lomachenko's 3rd Gold Medal; 2011 World Amateur Boxing Championship Competition.

e) Vasyl Lomachenko's 4th Gold Medal; 2012 London Olympics. Defeated his opponent 19:9.

Just imagine what his regional and domestic achievements are!

Lomachenko completed his amateur career with a record of 396-1-1.

Apparently he avenged his only draw and loss! Talk about competitive.

Obviously Lomachenko has only just had one professional fight - where he blew out Jose Ramirez for the WBO international featherweight title in 4 rounds.

But, really that's not bad for your 1st professional fight. OK, let's look at the other weight divvies and see what there is for Vasyl Lomachenko

- At junior lightweight there are a lot of exiting fights that can be made for this guy; Roman Martinez, Burgos, Magdaleno.

- At featherweight there are also some exiting fights that can be made; Mickey Garcia, Chris John, Mares, Salido, DeLeon, Dib, Walters, Gradovich (fellow Russian/Ukrainian)

- At junior featherweight there is; Rigondeaux, Donaire, Frampton, Darchinyan, Martinez, Quigg

Also, Gary Russell is a super featherweight, but that would also be a good southpaw (Vasyl

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Lomachenko is a southpaw as well) match-up and one that Russell would probably laugh at (thinking Vasyl Lomachenko is too raw for him); whilst Vasyl himself would easily take the fight and show how he deals with speed.

Gamboa is a lightweight if I remember correctly. I think Lomachenko would fight Gamboa. Not sure who would win there, particularly with the power and weight difference favoring Yuiorkis. But Vasyl Lomachenko would not be too phased with Gamboa I believe.

So, particularly with Top Rank behind him I think we're going to see a lot of Vasyl Lomachenko.

[url]http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vasyl_Lomachenko

The Shadow says:

[QUOTE=stormcentre;40081] My money is on the fact that Arum currently believes Lomachenko is his best bet to economically and physically hurt Rigo.[/QUOTE]

You better believe it. And you're SO right about Arum. He's a vindictive little man. He owes him fights so that's where that is at.

And he is definitely NOT happy with Rigo, his manager or his co-promoters. He's trying to get Rigo beat before Rigo goes to Showtime, which all signs point to. Espinoza has said he'd love to have him.

Gary Hyde and Caribe Promotions are a torn in Arum's side. You're right, they were hoping Donaire would ice him but that will never happen. I think Rigo knocks him out next time, quite frankly.

As for Loma, who struck me as a miniature version of Triple G, they got Salido lined up for him in a championship fight in January, I believe.

By next year, we could be looking at a guy who'll be a former world champion with a 2-1 record. Unreal.

TotoyBato says:

This article is about Ward. There is somebody exactly like him today. Only He's wiser (long in tooth). It would be great to see the Master school this pretender Andre Ward.

amayseng says:

im a huge fan of ward you can check my posts for years now but the guy holds waaaaaaaaaaaaay too much..

he will sadly never be a real draw

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TotoyBato says:

Ward wins. Yaaaay!!!

Bernie Campbell says:

You dirty water dogs have to shift your attentions to the Samir Samil Sam phenomena about a decade and fortnite ago! Guy kicked major behind! Lewis and Co kept ducking him! Larry Merchant gave no cred!

The Shadow says:

Bernie, Samir Samil Sams Bar never suffered true ducking. The TRUE victim of duckdom hails from Denmark by way of Kampala, Uganda! And the frisco's name is Ayub Kalule!!

Sugar Ray Leonard narrowly escaped a shellacking from this beast, as the Ugandan Giant was prematurely stopped while ahead on points on every reputable scorecard except for the three blind mice ringside! Amazingly they had "Sugar-In-My-Tank" Ray Leonard ahead!

Now we know why he was named Ray Charles. His parents knew blind men would judge his fights! Abomination! He will go down in history as another frisco Bernie Hopkins, a middleweight fraud!

Another guy who got the shaft by the boxing establishment was Sugar Tony La Rosa! He bravely hit the road to face local hero Brian Nielsen, only to get the shaft! Robbed of his coveted IBO strap, which Volodomyr Klychko now holds! Nielsen struck him with rabbit punches while he was down. Unconscious or semi conscious from the carnage, that home cooking referee called it a clean knockdown! No way friscoe!

Crime, I say! Like a thief in the night! Steffen Tangstad was another victim of the duckers of the time.

Dicky Ryan! Lionel Butler! Peter McNeely! If only they caught a break, history would be different!

The Shadow says:

[ATTACH=CONFIG]102[/ATTACH]

[ATTACH=CONFIG]103[/ATTACH]

Look at these two specimens! And look at the crime unfolding before your eyes!