

Amir Khan storms to 76 second win

06/12/2009 08:04 by guardian

Almost as quickly as Breidis Prescott demolished him only 15 months ago, his career supposedly in tatters, the Bolton world champion Amir Khan destroyed the New Yorker Dmitriy Salita to seal a comeback as convincing as any in recent times. Before the boxers even had time to work up a sweat, Khan dropped the previously unbeaten Salita heavily in centre ring with a left and a right. He rocked his unprotected head back time and again, had him down again for eight in a neutral corner, then finished him with a left hook after only 76 seconds to keep his WBA light-welterweight title at the first time of asking. Prescott, who lost to Kevin Mitchell on the undercard, had taken 54 seconds to beat Khan. Talk about a reversal of fortunes. The swiftness of it all made it difficult to take in the sheer force of Khan's blows. He had told us earlier he had felt the "power lines" of his punching growing by the week back at the Wild Card gym in Los Angeles and last night in a packed Metro Radio Arena, he delivered on that assessment, showing thoroughly bad intentions from the bell. If he has had trouble pleasing a few fans in the recent past, this win, will surely win them over. If he does leave these shores for the United States, he will be missed more than ever. Salita at the end looked as confused as he did battered, leaving on unsteady legs, eyes glazed, an opponent who had enriched the promotion of a big fight between a Jew and a Muslim with dignity and intelligence, but who found those admirable qualities no use against a fired-up champion. Admittedly, Salita came with a padded record and had been down a few times in his career. But he was the mandatory challenger and a decent one. He tried briefly to fight back but could see only a blur of hurtful leather in front of him as Khan threw punches from all angles. The secret, Khan said, was the intensity of his training under Freddie Roach. "Even on the pads, you know when you feel your power lines, your power going through punches. I don't normally knock sparring partners out," he said, "but [I have been] doing that. And that's with 14oz gloves." Take four ounces away from that protective padding in a championship fight and you arm Khan with a pair of seriously lethal weapons. He has always been a good finisher; last night the increase in power was startling. Earlier, Mitchell came in a pound under the lightweight limit of 9st 9lb against Prescott, whose arrival in the ring for this WBO world title eliminator, was greeted with hearty derision and who looked bigger than the Dagenham fighter. He'd struggled on the scales, and he struggle in the fight, Mitchell winning easily on all three cards: 119-110, 118-111 and 117-111. A cautious start looked like turning it into a scaled down version of Haye-Valuev, as Mitchell ran and sniped, and Prescott swung and missed. When the Colombian knocked out Khan in 54 seconds last year, he was gifted more openings than a Harrod's sale, so Mitchell, who talked with Khan in the afternoon, avoided all risk for all but a few raids on the visitor's chin. He cut his eye deeply in the fifth, hardly took a big shot throughout and was in command from halfway to the end. Whatever Khan told him, he must have been listening. It was the best performance of Mitchell's unbeaten career. They hugged at the start of the 12th, then Prescott belted him with a long right. Mitchell had only to stay away from the increasingly weak bombs to win. But so confident was he that he dropped his hands and stuck his chin out in a neutral corner, again evading Prescott's clumsy chopping right. Is there a chance of Khan-Mitchell down the road? It would be some ticket seller, although the Londoner has to get his hands on a world title first. On this showing, that looks a distinct possibility. The former WBO interim super-featherweight champion Alex Arthur is running out of career options after going up two divisions and losing an eight-rounder, 78-76, to Nigel Wright of Crook. Arthur's fellow Scot John Simpson took six-and-a-bit one-sided rounds to stop actor and former amateur star Steve Bell of Manchester on cuts to retain his Commonwealth featherweight title. It was only Bell's second loss in 22 fights but, at 33, acting might be a wiser way to earn a living. Frank Warren's Olympians came through unscathed. Frankie Gavin, who won his world amateur title at lightweight then failed to make weight in Beijing, is a fully blown welterweight now, and looked good again, stopping Frenchman Samir Tergaoui in the last of six rounds, his fifth early win from as many professional starts. Middleweight gold medallist James DeGale is a 12-stone fighter now but could not quite find the power to stop tough Welshman Nathan King, taking a four-round verdict, 40-37. Billie Joe Saunders won all six rounds against Barnsley's Lee Noble.

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