

Preview: Pavlik/Taylor II

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It just doesn't get much better than this. Two big, tough, hard hitting, world class middleweights ... cueing up the rematch of a fight many pundits considered the Fight of the Year in 2007. Can "The Ghost" do it again? Will the fireworks be just as fierce this time around? I cannot wait to find out. The pay per view is ordered. The Great Lakes Burning River Pale Ale is on ice. My cuz previews tonight's epic rematch.



What a difference a few months makes.

Back in September of 2007, Jermain Taylor (27-1-1, 17 KO) was on top of the world. He was the undisputed middleweight champion. "The Pride of Arkansas" could do no wrong. This natural athlete had fought and defeated every single opponent in his path and was considered one of boxing's top pound for pound fighters.

Then on September 29th, 2007, all of that came to a crashing halt with a thunderous bang.

Kelly "The Ghost" Pavlik (32-0, 29 KO) derailed the Taylor express with a huge flurry of left and right hands that landed at will. Uppercuts, hooks, and straight punches rained down and a new champion was crowned. The fight ended in a 7th round TKO.

Now on Saturday night at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, Pavlik will look to duplicate his feat from just a short time ago. The roles are now reversed, with a very important twist.

The middleweight limit in boxing is 160 pounds. When Pavlik beat Taylor, he took all of his titles. The fight tonight is going to be at a catch weight of 166 pounds. It was part of the rematch clause that was Jermain Taylor's doing. Kelly Pavlik's belts will not be on the line. Win, lose, or draw, he will remain the king of the division.

As a fight fan, I think Jermain Taylor's career is on the line. In all of his fights prior to his knockout loss, he was never really hurt or in much danger. The competition was either lacking or he was fighting counter punching defensive fighters like Bernard Hopkins and Winky Wright.

Jermain Taylor in the first fight nearly closed the show in the second round. Kelly Pavlik somehow found a way to get up and regroup. Doing so, Pavlik showed the heart and will that a true champion is supposed to have. He came back and destroyed Taylor's unbeaten streak and possibly his future. When Taylor went down, there was no attempt to get to his feet. He crumbled in the corner. Is that a sign of what's to come for Taylor?

We know the determination that Kelly Pavlik possesses, we saw that in the first installment. If Jermain Taylor can find that hunger, he will have a shot against the new poster boy in the world of boxing.

Jermain Taylor has all the physical tools of a champion. Good movement, sharp counter punching, and quick hands. His defense was suspect against Pavlik, but then again, everyone's is. One of the keys to the rematch is the mental makeup of Taylor. It was his first time he ever lost. He was knocked out in a vicious manner. The first few rounds are going to tell us a lot about the makeup of Jermain Taylor. If he comes in tentative, we might be in for a repeat of the first time these two stepped into the squared circle back in September.

Another key to the fight just might be the catch weight. Who will it benefit more? How big of a difference will it make come fight night?

Kelly Pavlik is the bigger puncher. The thought of being able to put more force behind his dynamite hands is pretty scary. The downside to that is his defense. Pavlik is known to take punishment and this might slow him down.

Jermain Taylor relies on his athletic ability and speed to get the better of his opponents. He also might be slowed down both on offense and defense. Taylor had Pavlik hurt very badly in the first fight but then ran out of gas. The extra weight could possibly tire him out even earlier this time. However, that added power might have ended the first fight in his favor.

The biggest factor in this fight is going to be the focus of the two champions and where their heads are.

Jermain Taylor was brutally knocked out in the first fight. He is back with his old trainer who is like a father to him. He never lost before and can get back to the top of the mountain with a solid victory. Everybody thought he was going to win the first time around and now nobody is giving him a chance to beat Pavlik.

Right now, Kelly Pavlik is on top of the world. "The Pride of Youngstown, Ohio" is now being called the savior of boxing. His promoter Bob Arum is calling him the biggest puncher in the division since Tommy Hearns, and maybe even bigger. Pavlik is really in a win win situation. If he comes out victorious, he will have further validated his win last fall against one of boxings top pound for pound fighters. If he was to lose, he's still the middleweight champion of the world.

Which fighter is going to want it more? Taylor can again be the talk of boxing with a win. Pavlik will climb even higher up the pound for pound rankings with another impressive performance.

I expect a great fight between two excellent competitors. I look for Taylor to come out loose and ready to get his pride back. I know Pavlik will be gunning for that chin early to make Taylor question himself. The first few rounds are going to be the most important. If Pavlik can land some big early shots, I see Taylor crumbling under the bright lights and going down again. On the other hand, if Taylor can land some good punches of his own and shake off those heavy hands of Kelly we might witness a twelve round masterpiece by the former champion.

Tonight's fight is a make or break fight for Jermain Taylor, no doubt about it. It could also be the springboard to the top and the beginning of many megafights for Kelly "The Ghost" Pavlik.

Let's put all the talk aside and ring that bell for this one to get started.