

The Mouthpiece

The Ultimate Warrior's Legacy & Legend—Wilson Dominates Sheika

By: George Hanson Jr., Esq.

Date: Saturday, April 23, 2011
Venue: Caesar's, Atlantic City, New Jersey
Promoter: Peltz Boxing Promotions
Matchmaker: J. Russell Peltz
Coverage: www.gofightlive.com
Ring Announcer: Dean Stone
Referees: Earl Brown, Dave Franciosi & Brian O'Melia
Photos: www.christoneyphotography.com

I have never found myself at a loss for words. However, writing about Philadelphia cruiserweight Garrett "The Ultimate Warrior" Wilson has been a daunting task because I really don't know where to start. There is so much I want to say that I don't know if it can be contained in my customary seven-page article. I guess it is not difficult writing about Wilson, since my opening was about how I can't find the words to begin my story. I guess that is the genius of crafting a great article—you write about being lost for words. If I really were at a standstill then this page would be blank. That brings to mind an old joke: "If someone tells you that they are a pathological liar, should you believe them?" Don't try to figure out that one. Where was I? Oh yeah – back to Wilson who has to be one of the most interesting and intriguing fighters to grace the squared circles in the City of Brotherly Love in the past decade. Having trained alongside him the past five years



(L –R) Rice, Wilson and Referee O'Melia

and been face-to-face with him in the ring—even though it was just to the body—I can't understand why any reasonable person would want to face him unless they had no other option. He is fighting for his legacy and legend—literally!

I was at ringside in Hamilton, New Jersey on March 26, 2010 the first time Wilson tried to send Omar Sheika of Patterson, New Jersey to the sweet science retirement home. The first two rounds it appeared that the much-traveled Sheika had reached boxing

menopause and could no longer produce a winning performance. However, Wilson's two-round barrage that had Sheika's face appearing as though he had stuck it in a wasp nest was the climax of their encounter as he lacked stamina and ran out of gas. The cagey Sheika, relying on his experience, slow-walked the young, eager fighter, pinned him to the ropes like a sailor trapping a buxom blonde on the walls of a dance hall, placed his punches to the body and ripped off a combination that went unanswered—forcing Referee Linsey Page to call a halt at 1:32 of Round 4 of the scheduled eight-rounder.

A lot has changed since Sheika outsmarted and outlasted the inexperienced Philly fighter. Wilson has a new trainer, Rodney Rice—the Army veteran who holds a Master's has tightened many of Wilson's technical deficiencies, vastly improving his conditioning and his approach to fighting. In his last fight on November 5th, Wilson traveled to Ohio and put the once highly touted cruiserweight prospect Aaron Williams to sleep in Round 7, angering the hometown crowd and almost causing a riot, which required him and Rice to



Wilson (R.) connects with a powerful right.

be ushered hastily to the dressing room by the police. There is another reason for Wilson being more motivated and sedulous in his pursuit of a world title—a new addition to his family, six-month old son, Legend. Wilson and his wife have three other children, son Dean (age 10), daughters Ajalon (age 6) and Legacy (age 3). Thus, you now understand that Wilson is fighting figuratively and literally for his legacy and legend.

Boxing is a solitary ego sport and I knew that even though Wilson is a humble spirit the loss to Sheika plagued him. He knew that his lack of conditioning and inability to follow the fight plan were his downfall, allowing him to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. He constantly begged for a rematch by hounding Nedal Abuhumoud, Sheika's promoter, on Facebook. Once the fight was set he began training like his life depended on being victorious. He honed his skills by sparring with IBF cruiserweight champ, Steve "USS" Cunningham, heavyweight contender "Fast" Eddie Chambers, light-heavyweight contender Yusaf Mack and super-middleweight Dhafir "No Fear" Smith, who earlier in the year defeated former champion Jeff Lacy and possibly ended his chances of ever contending for a title. Equally important, Wilson, who despises roadwork, became a road warrior by logging countless miles in preparation for the most important battle of his three-year professional boxing career. I knew Sheika was in trouble the day he signed the contract.

Wilson (9 wins – 5 losses – 0 draws – 4 kos) strolled out of the dressing room walking gallantly to the ring like Spartacus entering the Coliseum with Rihanna’s hit single *Run This Town* blaring over the speakers—a precursor to what was about to unfold. Sheika



(30 wins – 10 losses – 0 draws – 21 kos) entered the ring ready for battle in a white t-shirt drenched with sweat. The bell rang and they began slowly probing for openings with Sheika being the aggressor. While retreating, Wilson stopped on a dime and fired a short overhand right followed by a left hook that missed the target by centimeters. Had those two punches connected it is axiomatic that the ring would have been crowded with the medical team trying to keep a comatose Sheika from walking towards the white light. Simply put, the fat lady would have been singing bedtime songs.

Wilson (L.) connects with a left.

Wilson fought a poetic battle for the remainder of the way. He got on his toes and snapped Sheika’s head back with his jack-hammer jab. However, power concedes to no one and the grizzled veteran who boasts a win over Glenn “The Road Warrior” Johnson wasn’t going to be sent into Shady Pines without a fight—Sheika kept coming trying to goad his younger adversary in a shoot-out. However, this time Wilson was in shape and whenever Sheika landed a good punch he would return fire with right hands and left hooks letting his nemesis know that it is a different day—The Ultimate Warrior was fighting for his legacy and legend.

Bleeding from cuts above his eyes, Sheika in an attempt to slow the young fighter “accidentally” landed a low blow in Round 5 that garnered a warning from Referee O’Melia. Wilson’s speed was just too much for the battle-worn fighter who seems to be a step behind a younger man who showed no signs of taking his foot off the gas. If I were similarly situated I probably would have thrown another punch south of the border as was the case in Round 7 when Sheika cracked Wilson in the gonads forcing the referee to take a point from him making it a 10-8 round for Wilson. The next rounds would follow a similar pattern with Wilson repeatedly hammering Sheika with hooks and rights. But when you have a cast-iron chin and the heart of a lion it is impossible to retreat or wave the white flag of surrender. Sheika kept coming despite being set back on his heel at the end of Round 9. Feeling lithe and coming down the stretch with his eyes on the finish line, in Round 10 Wilson got on his toes like a young Muhammad Ali and fired away from long distance with jabs coming down to earth in short intervals, unloading from his arsenal before taking off like a B-12 bomber. Never get too relaxed when faced with a battle-tested Sheika. The wily pugilist caught Wilson with a combination to the body and

head almost at the close of the round that sent a message that it wasn't time for the undertaker to throw dirt on him. At the bell, Wilson jumped up in the air, a sign of machismo, a tactical play on Sheika's psyche and that of the audience to allay any concern that he was once again going to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

I scored the eleventh round for Sheika who outworked Wilson along the ropes by going to the body. Knowing he needed a knockout to win, Sheika gave it all he had. However, Wilson wasn't about to let lightning strike twice and got back behind the driver's seat in the final round by jabbing and going downstairs to the body. Wilson captured the vacant USBA cruiserweight title by unanimous decision—119-108 and 118-109 twice. It was the inevitable changing of the guards that is commonplace in boxing. Wilson now has a signature win and accomplished what former light-heavyweight champion Glen Johnson could not do—defeat Omar Sheika—who we hope will hang up his gloves, bringing closure to a wonderful career. J. Russell Peltz, Wilson's promoter, should have him on one of the major networks—HBO, Showtime or ESPN.

Bethlehem Pennsylvania's Ronald Cruz (11 wins – 0 losses – 0 draws – 8 kos) was wickedly brilliant in another outing. This time he moved up a weight class and faced Manuel Guzman (7 wins – 10 losses – 2 draws – 3 kos) of Lancaster, Pennsylvania in a



Cruz (L.) throwing the straight right on Guzman.

scheduled eight-round welterweight bout. Given Guzman's less than stellar record it was safe to assume that this would be what is called a "busy fight"—something to keep the rapidly rising Cruz in condition and not laboring away in the gym with long lapses between fights. But records don't beat you, fighters do and I have been at ringside on several occasions when a fighter with a losing record upsets the undefeated prospect.

Thus, I doubt that Cruz had his mind on the after party, looking beyond Guzman. Cruz came out in the opening stanza probing away at Guzman with shots that didn't seem to have much power on them, lulling his opponent into a false sense of security as though they were in a light sparring session. Amazingly, Guzman mirrored Cruz and threw almost the exact same punches as they tapped away at each other. I have seen Cruz fight enough times to know that at some point during one of these "harmless" exchanges he is going to turn the heat up and bomb away at an unsuspecting Guzman. True to form, it happened in the third round and Cruz was caught like a Congressman with his pants down on top of a White House intern—shocked that things were take a turn for the

worse. Cruz landed a hard left hook, right hook combination and began to break Guzman's spirit raking him further with punches to the body and head. Switching to the southpaw stance, Cruz felt it was past Guzman's bedtime and was trying to send him to sleep by rocking him for the last minute of the round with some blistering shots. The bell rang ending the third round and shortly thereafter Referee Brown informed everyone that Guzman was finished for the night because he had hurt his elbow during the exchanges and was unable to continue. Maybe it was for the best because one way or another, Cruz was not going to allow Guzman to remain upright for the final bell. Cruz was declared the winner by technical knockout at 3:00 of Round 3.

Early Monday morning at 6:30 a.m. while up to do my famous 8.5 mile run, which starts at the Philadelphia Art Museum and loops around the Schuylkill River banks, I saw undefeated Philadelphia heavyweight Bryant "By By" Jennings (6 wins – 0 losses – 0 draws – 3 kos) returning, having completed the run. I immediately knew that David Williams (6 wins – 3 losses – 1 draw – 2 kos) was in trouble. Call me Nostradamus, but I



had a better chance of surviving a shark tank with a blood-soaked shirt than Williams had of making it to the final bell. The gong rang commencing Round 1 and Jennings attacked like an airport drug dog sniffing luggage from Colombia.

Jennings (R.) attacking Williams.

It wasn't long before a left hook followed by a right hook smashed Williams depositing him on the canvas momentarily. William made it to his feet, quickly took the count and was trying to navigate the precarious terrains of a Jennings onslaught when a short right hand sent him tumbling into the ropes, which kept him from touching the canvas. Referee Brown rightfully recorded it as a knockdown. For the remainder of the round Williams absorbed several vicious body shots from Jennings' 14-inch fists and was relieved to get a one-minute respite before the start of Round 2. Not out of the deep waters, Williams was using his legs to stay away from Jennings when a Bennie Briscoe-like jab traveled about six inches, smacked him in the head, driving him to the canvas. Quickly regaining his feet, Williams' internal organs were under duress as Jennings whacked away at his body until he heard the bell to end the round. I wasn't surprised, neither was the audience when William stayed on his stool unable to come out for Round 3. Jennings was declared

the winner by technical knockout at 3:00 of Round 2. I knew Williams should have stayed home.

There is a reason why professional boxing is called prize-fighting. Fighters are rewarded monetarily for entering and waging battle with their gloved fists. However, some pugilists for various circumstances oftentimes focus more on the prize and less on the fighting part of this contractual arrangement with the audience. What I am about to say will probably anger one of the fighters in the contest I am about to describe, but I have to “keep it real.” Besides, I still train and spar most days and I keep a case of “whup ass” in my locker in case the Hugo Boss and Hickey Freeman suits are taken as a sign of weakness and not a uniform for the professional arena in which I play. Philadelphia’s Jose “El Macho” Medina (15 wins – 20 losses – 0 draws – 11 kos), who began his career with 9 wins – 0 losses back in 2002 fighting as a welterweight and junior-middleweight and has won just once in his last 13 outings, appears to have his eyes fixated on the prize



and not so much on the fighting. Tonight, the 35-year-old fighter who stands five-feet-seven entered the ring weighing 175.5 pounds looking like a fat tick who lived in the ear of a German Shepherd to face Glassboro, New Jersey’s Derrick “Take It To The Bank” Webster (6 wins – 0 losses – 0 draws – 4 kos).

Webster (L.) landing the knockout punch!

The disparity in size was almost comical because the southpaw Webster is six-feet-four and weighs 169 pounds. However, Webster wasn’t smiling when the bell sounded and walked across the ring and dropped Medina with a sizzling straight left. Medina got to his feet as Referee Franciosi reached the count of two. He was coming forward, however, the tire around his midsection made it difficult for him to move with the alacrity of a fighter who has punished his body for battle. Medina made a second trip to the canvas compliments of Webster’s right jab. He climbed to his feet and Webster swarmed all over him throwing with bad intentions. Webster unleashed a right hook from his southpaw stance, snapping his hip into the motions putting all his weight behind the punch that sent Medina backwards like he was being baptized at a revival in the Mississippi River. Medina landed flat on his back like he was on the beach in Montego Bay sunbathing. The fight was over as the referee never bothering to count attended to the fallen fighter who gives meaning to my new word “fight-prizing.” Webster was the victor by knockout at 2:28 of Round 1.

Other Results: Welterweight **Dontre King** (3 wins – 9 losses – 2 draws – 1 ko) of Cambridge, Maryland used his jab and elusiveness to deliver a good ‘ole fashion beating to Philadelphia’s **Keane Davis** (1 win – 1 loss – 0 draws – 0 kos) forcing Referee Brown to call a halt at 1:29 of the third round, awarding King a technical knockout victory. From the onset, King peppered the shorter and awkward Davis with jabs and combinations hurting him repeatedly while it lasted. Debuting Philadelphia junior-welterweight **Korey “Lightning Rod” Sloane** dropped Vineland, New Jersey’s **Edgardo Torres** in the second round with a straight right hand capturing a unanimous four-round decision by scores of 39-36 and 38-37 twice with a knockdown being the deciding factor on the two scorecards of this evenly matched bout. In the opening bout of the evening, Atlantic City’s middleweight **Antowyan “Iceman” Aikens** lived up to his moniker by icing or knocking out **Willie “The Cobra” Mack** with a big right hand at 2:52 of the fourth and final round for these two debuting boxers. Mack never saw the right hand that caught him square on the chin, separating him from his senses. He was able to get to his feet but stumbled into the ropes forcing Referee Franciosi to call an end to the tightly contested match.

It was another action-packed night of the sweet science in front of a packed house. Sometimes it is easier for a camel to enter the eye of a needle than a fighter to accept the reality that his skills have diminished tremendously and it is time to ride off in the sunset. The majority of boxers, like many professional athletes remember themselves at their best—what they use to be and not the aged competitor that stares at them in mirror every morning. Boxers are probably the least likely to accept this reality. However, it is inevitable that sooner or later a younger fighter will write the last chapter of the book chronicling the stellar career of a grizzled veteran. Tonight, Garrett “The Ultimate Warrior” Wilson closed the curtains on Omar Sheika’s career with a brilliant performance. Wilson did what Sheika has done to so many elder statesmen of the squared circle who gave him an opportunity when he was a rising contender barnstorming through the ranks on his way to a title shot. Not much else to say...

Continue to support the sweet science, and remember, always carry your mouthpiece!

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