

Christmas Wishes.

Written by Steve Kim
Sunday, 21 December 2003 21:00

The day is nearly upon us- Christmas. Which means that most of you are probably running around like crazy this time of the year putting the finishing touches on the holiday season. And just days away from December 25th, most of you are doing some last minute X-mas shopping.

I was thinking about this a few days ago, I've gotten gifts for all my loved ones, family and friends(and I must admit, I did pick up a few things for myself), but what would I get for those in the game of boxing?

If I could play boxing's Kris Kringle, this is what I would put under the Christmas tree for those in boxing.

- Fernando Vargas: A good back. It's hard to imagine a guy who's supposed to be in his physical prime having back problems, but that's exactly the case with 'El Feroz', who just recently had to pull out of his February 21st date with Javier Castillejo.

While he may never be an elite fighter, like Oscar De La Hoya, Felix Trinidad or Shane Mosley, Vargas has always held his own with anyone he's ever fought. Love him or hate him, he makes for great theater and drama. The interest he has generated as an anti-hero has benefited the sport.

- Shane Mosley: The sense to take a 40-60 split with De La Hoya for a third bout. Mosley says that nothing less than an even split will be acceptable to him for another go-around with 'the Golden Boy' because of his two wins over him.

Sorry, but that's misguided. The bottom line is that Mosley still isn't the box-office draw that De La Hoya is- never will be, in fact- and another fight with De La Hoya still represents the most lucrative bout out there for him.

Bernard Hopkins: Some sanity. Now, I'm not saying he's gone totally insane or anything like that. To the contrary, his mind and mouth are among the sharpest in the game. But sometimes it seems that he out-thinks himself and doesn't know, what he doesn't know.

Which has led to him turning down multi-million dollar fights in exchange for making about three hundred grand against William Joppy. Leading folks to think that maybe he has lost his mind.

Vitaly Klitschko: A rematch with Lennox Lewis. Based on recent events and the mediocre nature of the heavyweight class, there's no doubt that Klitschko is the number one contender to Lewis title.

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He was doing pretty well before his first bout with Lewis was halted due to a grotesque cut over his left eye in June. Coming off a two round blowout of Kirk Johnson a few weeks ago, he deserves a second crack at Lewis.

- Manny Pacquiao: A new promoter. The whispers keep growing louder and louder that Pacquiao, coming off his demolition of Marco Antonio Barrera, is being ripped off blind by Murad Muhammad. And it's not the first time these types of allegations have been levied against him regarding 'the Pac Man'.

No fighter, ever, ever, deserves to be skimmed off of.

- The Middleweight Division: Someone to challenge Bernard Hopkins. Right now, this tradition laden class begins and ends with one man- Bernard Hopkins. Who despite his advanced age could seemingly make 30 title defenses. And it's not only because of how good he is- he is among the all-time greats in that division- but also the reality is that this division is shallower than Paris Hilton.

Look at the rest of the contenders in this class: Howard Eastman, Robert Allen(who's already been stopped by Hopkins), Rodney Jones, Sergey Tatevosyan, Carl Daniels(who was also halted by 'the Executioner'), Felix Strum, Kingsley Ikeke and William Joppy(the latest victim).

Where have you gone Wilford Scypion, Mustafa Hamsho and Juan Roldon?

- David Tua: An ab machine and running shoes. He can say whatever he wants, but the 'Tuaman' was much more effective when his weight hovered around 225, but as his weight has crept up north of 240, he's morphed into a one-dimensional, plodding and predictable heavyweight.

Just move six inches on him and you neutralize his vaunted left hook. Tua is susceptible to being out-boxed by anyone in the top 20.

- Ricardo Williams: Some discipline and maturity. From the day that Williams- a silver medalist in the 2000 Olympics- signed his \$1.6 million dollar signing bonus, Williams has been anything but a pro.

His professional career has been marked by laziness, indifference and general apathy. Someone needs to get it through to him that the real work begins after signing a big promotional contract. The work is just beginning, but will he ever realize that?

- John Ruiz: An attractive retirement package. Not only for his benefit, but really for ours. I mean, c'mon, how many of you out there would mind if you never had to sit through one of 'the Quiet Man's' fights ever again?

Didn't think so.

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- Derrick Gainer: Membership in the federal witness protection program. Again, this one's for us, too. But really for him. I mean after his pathetic showing against Juan Manuel Marquez in November, it would take a lot of gall to show himself in public ever again.

But I heard that he was at Roy Jones' fight against Antonio Tarver a week later. Geez, if he would've only shown that much guts against Marquez.

- Bob Arum: A gift decision on his behalf. Now, I don't usually want to bestow bad decisions on anyone, but I'm doing this so that Arum can stop crying foul every time a close verdict goes against him.

To see him call boxing a 'sewer sport' and totally denounce it after Mosley's second win over De La Hoya this past September, after all the success he's had in this game was disgraceful. Arum, has been a Hall-of-Famer promoter, his contributions to the game can not be discounted, but the allegations that he levied in the aftermath of Mosley-De La Hoya II was disturbing.

- Joel Casamayor: Recognition as the games best 130-pounder. Since beating Casamayor in a close bout in January of 2002, Acelino Freitas has taken on the likes of Daniel Attah, Juan Carlos Ramirez and Jorge Barrios- not exactly 'Murderer's Row' if you ask me. To top it off, 'Popo' has steadfastly stayed away from a rematch like a swinging bachelor shies away from commitment.

On the flip side, the crafty Cuban faced the likes of the unbeaten Nate Campbell and then the ever dangerous Diego Corrales in back to back fights, winning both. Now, Freitas is moving up to lightweight. Which makes this an easy call: Casamayor is the games best jr. lightweight.

- Floyd Mayweather: A new start. 'the Pretty Boy' was on the fast track for stardom just a few years. Armed with God-given talent, a bright smile and the promotional push of Top Rank, Mayweather looked to be the bookend superstar alongside De La Hoya.

But in late 1999, things took a change for the worse. Mayweather scoffed at a six fight- \$12 million deal from HBO, calling them 'slave wages', he would then hook up with rap mogul James Prince, which caused a division with his father Floyd Sr. that exists to this day. In the meantime his relationship with Arum and his company became strained to say the least.

All the while his public perception plummeted and stories of run-ins with either the law or the public, became more and more commonplace. The star had risen, and now it was falling like Enron stock.

But as we look to 2004, gone is Prince from his professional career, and according to Arum so is his surly attitude of the past few years. Arum, hopes to be able to

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undue the damage that Mayweather had inflicted on his career.

Mayweather has all the talent in the world. His toughest opponent has been himself.

- To all boxing fans: Great fights and unforgettable memories in 2004. Fans are the life blood of any business. Lets hope the fans are treated to a year of fantastic match-ups and even better fights.

Merry Christmas, everyone!!!