Pound-for-Pound.
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( IBOPboxing.com )

Monday September 22, 2003 ? ???? With Shane Mosley's not-so-controversial win over Oscar De La Hoya, there is a shake-up in the mythical 'pound-for-pound' standings. No, unlike the polls involving writers in other sports like college football, they don't mean much but they are great source of debate and conversation.

Based on what I've seen these past several months, here's one man's top ten:

1- Roy Jones- Yes, he can be so frustrating at times with his comments, his mercurial behavior and his choice of opponents, but you have to give him credit for making history by mastering the bigger- but not better- John Ruiz to capture the WBA heavyweight title. Not bad for a guy who won his first title at 160-pounds. Now the former undisputed light heavyweight champion goes back down to regain some of his belts against Antonio Tarver on November 8th.

HOW HE STAYS NUMBER ONE: By continuing to fight strong opposition- something he had deftly avoided in the past. Tarver is a solid guy who currently has both the WBA and IBF light heavyweight titles and is considered the best 175-pounder on the planet without the initials of RJ.

HOW HE WOULD DROP: If he goes back to his old ways of facing non-descript mis-mandatories like Richard Hall, Ricky Frazier and Glen Kelly, his stock goes the Enron route.

2- Bernard Hopkins- Ok, 'the Executioner' is here more on the overall scope of his career than what he's done recently. Yes, he's squandered away a lot of things in and out the ring since his dominating win over Felix Trinidad in 2001, but give him his due. He is one of the all-time great middleweights. You don't make 16 defenses of that title- unifying the division in the process without being a complete, all-around fighter.

HOW HE STAYS AT NUMBER TWO OR MOVES UP: By actually taking on some live opposition. Since his ground-breaking win over Felix Trinidad in 2001, he's taken on the likes of Carl Daniels and Morrade Hakkar.

HOW HE WOULD DROP: By continuing to negotiate his way out of fights, like he has against Joe Calzaghe and James Toney. Lately, he's done a lot more talking than fighting. It seems he's more interested in negotiating just to see his names in the headlines with no actual intention of going through with the actual bouts.

3- Marco Antonio Barrera- Yes, he's had some easy one's since taking apart Naseem Hamed a

few years back but he gets back down to business when he faces the dangerous Manny Pacquiao on November 15th. Barrera, is no longer just a brawler but also a technically sound boxer who can out-box you as well as break you down piece by piece.

HOW HE STAYS AT NUMBER THREE OR MOVE UP: Beating the dangerous Manny Pacquiao is a good start. Then, a highly anticipated rubber match with Erik Morales could be next. Wins here and you're talking about a sure-fire Hall-of-Famer.

HOW HE COULD DROP: If he would go back to the seniors tour of Johnny Tapia and Kevin Kelley.

4- Kostya Tszyu- He's basically just a part time fighter nowadays but we can't overlook the fact that not only has he unified the jr. welterweight division, he had to beat guys like Sharmba Mitchell, Zab Judah, Otkay Urkal, Jesse James Leija and Ben Tackie during that time. Work like that can not be ignored. 'the Thunder from Down Under' is a sharp-shooting craftsmen with great strength and conditioning. It's going to take one helluva man to take his crown.

HOW HE STAYS AT NUMBER FOUR OR MOVES UP: By continuing to face the worlds best jr. welterweights, preferably Arturo Gatti.

HOW HE COULD DROP: Staying active has not been one of his forte's the last few years. You get the feeling that Tszyu will soon be riding off into the sunset of what has been a very successful career.

5- Floyd Mayweather- We hear ya loud and clear, he's boorish outside the ring and boring inside of it. But you have to give 'the Pretty Boy' his due, he basically cleaned out the 130-pound division with dominating wins over Diego Corrales, Jesus Chavez, Angel Manfredy, Genaro Hernandez and Carlos Hernandez, he then moved up and beat the tough Jose Luis Castillo twice in back-to-back fights. He's got all the moves in the world and the only weakness he seems to have is a brittle set of mitts. You don't have to like him, but give him his due, he takes on all comers.

HOW HE STAYS AT NUMBER FIVE OR MOVES UP: Forget style points, if he keeps mowing down one world class fighter after another, how can you possibly not give him his due?

HOW HE COULD DROP: He has chronic hand problems, and while he's never been a true puncher, he has lost the ability to at least back up his opponents. If he has an Achilles heel, it's his hands and their ability to stand up over the test of time against solid foes.

6- Erik Morales- 'El Terrible' always looks as though he's about to fall over and die- and then he gathers himself for another hard fought win. Morales, in the eyes of many beat Barrera in their rematch and then he would dismantle the game Paulie Ayala. Till someone does actually beat him up badly, he has to be considered among the sports premiere fighters. You wont find a boxer with a bigger heart.

HOW HE STAYS AT NUMBER FOUR OR MOVES UP: Morales is moving up to 130-pounds

starting with his fight against Guty Espadas. Now, if he can take on and down the likes of Jesus Chavez, Carlos Hernandez and Acelino Freitas, his ranking must soar.

HOW HE COULD DROP: If he finds out he isn't a real 130-pounder.

7- Ricardo Mayorga- This guys probably the least skilled out of all the guys here, but you know what? It was good enough to beat Vernon Forrest twice and with those wins he became one of the few unified titlists in the sport, capturing the WBC and WBA welterweight crowns. He's raw, he's crude but he can punch like a mule kick and that's why he's here.

HOW HE STAYS AT NUMBER SEVEN OR MOVES UP: Very simple, he proves that his wins over Vernon Forrest aren't an aberration.

HOW HE COULD DROP: He drinks and smokes his championship belts away. Mark my words, the crafty Cory Spinks will give him fits in December.

8- Shane Mosley- What did LL Cool J once say," Don't call it a comeback, I've been here for years" Well, Mosley did at least get lost in a ( Vernon) Forrest for awhile but he was able to mark his return to the games elite with a close decision win over Oscar De La Hoya. Which makes him two-for-two against 'the Golden Boy', not many guys can say that. Now, if he can't get a third bout with him, names like Winky Wright, Mayorga and Fernando Vargas could be in his future.

HOW HE COULD STAY AT NUMBER EIGHT OR MOVE UP: Do the opposite of when he first beat De La Hoya by taking on blue-chippers like Wright, Mayorga and Vargas in the future.

HOW HE COULD DROP: He does the same thing he did the first time in the aftermath of his first win over 'the Golden Boy'

9-Oscar De La Hoya- It wouldn't have been right to drop Oscar from this list despite his loss to Mosley because lets face it, it was a close fight that many thought he won and on that night, he probably would have beaten just about any other fighter. De La Hoya still has a quick jab and his left hook is still among the best in the business. If he decides not to retire, many more big fights are in his future.

HOW HE STAYS AT NUMBER NINE OR MOVES UP: He stops complaining about the decision and moves on to other big fights, wins those, and then takes on Mosley for a third time.

HOW HE DROPS: If he continues to moan and decides to retire.

10- Juan Manuel Marquez- This could be a little bit of a surprise to some of you, considering that most place him as the third best featherweight, behind Barrera and Morales( who is moving up in weight) but it says here that he's the most avoided fighter in the world and if he were to get opportunities against the likes of Barrera, Morales or anyone else for that matter, it would be a 50-50 proposition. He gets a chance to further solidify his lofty ranking when he takes on the

crafty Derrick Gainer to unify their two championship belts.

HOW HE STAYS AT NUMBER TEN OR MOVES UP: He stops getting avoided by the other big name featherweights.

HOW HE COULD DROP: He continues to get avoided like the Bubonic Plague and he gets bored, leading to an upset loss.