

## Ruiz Plans to go to the Head to Defeat Golota

Written by Rick Folstad

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These two should be separated until fight time, kept in different hotels on opposite sides of town until the last minute. You don't want anyone catching a wild haymaker before the opening bell. Too much on the line.

You could feel the heat Tuesday on the shared conference call surrounding the Nov. 13 WBA heavyweight championship fight between John "The Quietman" Ruiz and Andrew "Powerful Pole" Golota at Madison Square Garden.

Funny thing, though. It wasn't Golota and Ruiz who drew first blood. It was their corners.

Sam Colonna, who trains Golota, threw the first punch. His opening remarks included: "You have to be careful of John Ruiz. He's a dirty fighter. He hits behind the head, he hits low. When Andrew does that, he gets disqualified."

That's when Norman "Stoney" Stone, who trains and manages Ruiz, jumped in.

"It's just the opposite," he said. "Golota clubs, punches behind the head and hits below the belt. I don't know where Sam's coming from but ..."

"Just watch a couple of those tapes and see," Colonna said.

"I've been with Johnny for 100 fights and I've never seen him hit anybody behind the head," Stone fired back.

"That's because you were too busy arguing with the referee," Colonna said.

Oh, oh.

"Sam, I seen you crawling out of the ring like a cockroach," Stone said, referring to the riot at Madison Square Garden in 1996 when Golota was disqualified for hitting Riddick Bowe several times below the belt. "You want a purple heart or a silver star? Sam, you fell on the floor and got stitches....But it's not us that's fighting."

Too bad. The smart money would be on Stone, who later said he thinks both Golota and Colonna are good guys.

"But it's not their time," he said.

As for the two actual fighters, Golota sounded like we were keeping him awake, like he wanted to take a nap. When asked how he felt about getting a draw in his recent title fight with Chris Byrd, he didn't exactly rage about the indignities of the fight game. He took the cold, rational approach.

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"What can you do?" he said quietly. "There is no way around (the draw). You can't change it. I tried to force him to fight me again, but he didn't want to."

Z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z.

Ruiz, meanwhile, let us in on a little secret. He told us how he has always been ready physically, it's the mental part of the game that has come hardest for him.

"There have been many fights in my career that I didn't have the strength and the heart to go out there and fight," he said. "I never had the mentality to think I was the best out there, the mind of a champion. I always had the mind of the worker. This time, I am working on my strength and I'm working on my weakness, which is my mentality. I have to go out there and know that I can beat anybody in the world."

Neither fighter thinks it's going to be an easy fight. Asked if anyone thought it would go the distance, Stone didn't hesitate.

"No," he said.

Colonna agreed, predicting it would be over between rounds five and eight.

The fighters themselves weren't so specific.

"I'm prepared to go the distance," Golota said.

"I'm ready to go 12 rounds," Ruiz said.

Let's hope that doesn't happen.