

Oops, I Did it Again

Written by Steve Kim
Wednesday, 12 May 2004 18:14

Part of our jobs as columnists is to not only give facts, but to dispense opinions on certain subjects. Being a columnist is much different than being a beat writer. A beat writer or reporter tells you that fighter A, hit fighter B with a right cross, and so on.

Now, from atop our soapbox, as columnists, we paint a certain picture with how we see things. Not only are we licensed to give opinions, it's expected of us.

But we have to be careful not to go overboard on things. Sometimes, we have to gather more facts, before giving out our opinions and forecasting the future. A few years ago I gushed about a young prospect by the name of Francisco Bojado. I thought like Coca-Cola, he was the real thing. Soon after that, he would lose to Juan Carlos Rubio in stunning fashion. Now, he's rebounded from that loss, avenging his loss to Rubio last November and winning the rest of his fights. But while it looks like he is developing into a solid young prizefighter, he certainly hasn't shown the star power I once forecasted for him.

I felt like one of those guys in the late '90's who threw down his mortgage payments on internet stocks, only to see them plummet. I learned a valuable lesson, no matter how good a prospect might look against carefully matched, handpicked opposition, before sizing up anyone's bust for Canastota, I should be more patient with my forecasts.

But then Dominick Guinn, happened. And it looks like I may have invested in a pyramid scheme all over again.

Now, it's not like Guinn was this heavily hyped prospect, in fact, he was a guy that flew under the radar since he wasn't an Olympian and was nurtured rather slowly by his promoter Main Events. He had been allowed to learn his craft slowly and surely and last year he broke out with big wins over Michael Grant and Duncan Dokiwari.

Ok, so beating Grant in 2003, is like pushing around Great Britain after the Revolutionary War, but the Dokiwari win I thought I stamped him as a legitimate player in the heavyweight division. In that fight he took some good solid punches from a big, strapping heavyweight and was able to turn the tide with his precise and powerful punching, to win an entertaining ten rounder. I thought to myself, 'Hey, he showed a good beard, he overcame a noticeable size advantage and he showed that he could go the distance in a tough fight. He's proven himself'

And unlike like recent U.S. heavyweight failures, like Grant, Lance Whitaker and Jameel McCline, Guinn was a boxer first and foremost. He had a deep amateur background and a solid foundation of fundamental skills. Plus, like I mentioned above, he was battle-tested.

So by the time he was slated to face Monte Barrett, I was fully on the bandwagon. And Barrett was the perfect foe, he was coming off a close loss to Joe Mesi and every other time he had stepped up, he had lost to the likes of Wladimir Klitschko and Whitaker. This, was supposed to

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be the perfect opponent at the perfect time. Just to make sure everything was tilted in Guinn's favor, the fight would take place in his home state of Arkansas.

But I guess Barrett, never got the script.

From the very first round, Barrett would give Guinn fits with his movement and consistent jab. Guinn, had readily admitted that he preferred to face the bigger, more ponderous heavyweights, that are so prevalent today. They made for easier and bigger targets- and you didn't need as much skill to down them. But Barrett, while not exactly Larry Holmes, does have passable skills and he employed enough movement and offense to keep Guinn off-balance and out of kilter the whole night.

Guinn looked flatter than a pancake, but perhaps, it was Barrett that was flattening him. He would clearly establish control of the bout in the fourth round with a left hook that shook Guinn. It was at that juncture in the fight that Guinn seemed to acquiesce to Barrett, his body language and facial expression were eerily similar to that of Shane Mosley a few weeks ago during his losing effort against Winky Wright.

No matter how hard he was exhorted by his training team of Mark Breland and Ronnie Shields, Guinn, seemed only to be there physically, but not mentally. In a time when he needed to show passion, hunger, fire and a sense of desperation, he fought like a guy who was content to just survive and run out the clock.

Barrett, on the other hand is a guy with five mouths to feed and from what I heard, a marriage on the rocks. He would say that he wasn't just hungry, but he was flat out 'starving'. And it showed, he was clearly the one willing to walk through fire to win this fight. He wanted it more and it showed, and despite the best efforts of an Arkansas judge(who somehow had Guinn winning), his victory was so clear that he was awarded a split decision- that was anything but. Because it was unanimous to everyone else that the Brooklynite was the winner.

I guess P.T. Barnum must've been talking about me. Yeah, I can't help it, I'm a sucker for good young prospects. Hey, they are the future and sometimes you get smitten, like a young child who gets a new toy on Christmas. Yeah, in the beginning it's the greatest thing in the world, but soon, it might run out of batteries, or break, or perhaps you just get bored with it. And pretty soon, you realize that Tonka Toy or Lego set you've had for years is what you should've appreciated all along.

I guess that's me right now. But never again, I will absolutely, positively, not go overboard in my effusive praise of youngsters until they do something substantial. I've learned my lesson, I'm drawing the line right here.

But y'know, there's this young kid, undefeated and.....