

The E-Mailperson Delivers

Written by Randy Gordon
Tuesday, 04 April 2006 19:00

I get a phenomenal amount of e-mails, especially when you add up the ones I receive here at TheSweetScience and on my personal e-mail accounts. I read them, respond to them (as time permits), then discard them.

Every so often—and now is that “so often”—I’ll share some of those letters with you, giving you a small sampling of what’s on the minds of readers of TheSweetScience.

So, let’s open the e-mail bag (the first three letters pertain to the column I wrote about Marc Ratner and his predecessor, Chuck Minker):

From Don Ackerman, President, International Boxing Hall of Fame
Great article, Randy. I remember when you brought Chuck to our seminar in the Catskills. (Author’s Note: Don, it was our pleasure and honor to play host to such a brilliant and wonderful man.)

From Dan W., Chicago, IL
I was really moved by your story on Chuck Minker and Marc Ratner. You weren’t the only one who got watery. I even googled Minker’s name to learn more about him. I see where they’ve named a community center in Las Vegas after him.

From Terry K., Calabasas, CA
That was a moving tribute to both Marc Ratner and Chuck Minker. I had the pleasure of meeting Minker in 1990 (at the Julio Cesar Chavez-Meldrick Taylor bout) and Ratner in the mid-90’s. You are so right about the professionalism that they both possessed. Boxing was indeed lucky to have them.

From Tommy P., Albuquerque, N.M.
Q: I am an 18-year-old boxing fan. I’ve been devotedly following the sport for the last five years. I enjoyed your article on Marc Ratner’s retirement and the friendship both of you had with Chuck Minker. You mentioned that Minker was a “superb boxing judge.” Can you tell me a few of the more notable fights he judged?
A: Among the higher-profile bouts Minker judged were seven Larry Holmes’ bouts, including ones vs. Muhammad Ali, Tim Witherspoon and Randall “Tex” Cobb; the first Sugar Ray Leonard-Thomas Hearns fight; the Salvador Sanchez-Wilfredo Gomez bout; and the rematch between Aaron Pryor and Alexis Arguello.

From Tim L., Reno, NV
Q: Any idea who may be in the running to take Marc Ratner’s place as Executive Director of the Nevada State Athletic Commission?
A: This one is no contest! Looks like the NSAC has already chosen Deputy Attorney General Keith Kizer as Ratner’s replacement. Kizer, who has been handling much of the commission’s legal issues for the past seven years, is an excellent choice. He knows boxing, loves boxing and

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knows the workings of NSAC better than anyone. He is a perfect choice to replace Ratner. The only question from this corner is “Will he be able to handle every controversial issue with as much skill, savvy, class and diplomacy as Ratner did?” Only time will tell. I say NSAC could not have chosen a better man. My bet is the commission listened to Ratner on this one, much in the way they listened to Chuck Minker back in 1992, when he pushed Ratner’s name at them.

From Alan S., Newport, R.I.

Q: In your mind, who was the best boxing referee in history?

A: I don’t even have to think about this one. The best there ever was—and still would be if he elected to climb back in the ring—is Larry Hazzard, the head of the New Jersey Boxing Control Board for the last 20 years. Joe Cortez is also up there on my list.

From Joe G., Bayville, N.Y.

Q: A few months back, I heard that the television show “The Contender” was coming back in late April. Then I heard it wasn’t. What’s the story?

A: July 18 looks like the date, ESPN looks like the network to carry it. Stay tuned.

From Jennifer B., Ann Arbor, MI

Q: When and if “The Contender” comes back for season II, what changes would you like to see made?

A: For one, I’d like to see more actual boxing time. I don’t mind seeing the guys with their wives, with their families and with each other, but I really need to see more boxing action, and less of the Batman & Robin POW! ZAP! BAM! stuff. Also, could the producers find a way to leave the babies out of the arena and with a babysitter? That sure makes for “great” television when we see a young child, screaming, crying and trembling in fear as they watch their father get the bejesus kicked out of them.

From Mike W., Binghamton, N.Y.

Q: I know there is no definitive answer to my question, but what do you think is hurting boxing the most?

A: Mike, you weren’t exactly clear on the question, but if you mean “What is boxing’s most glaring ailment?” I would have to say—as I’ve long said—the sanctioning bodies.

Quickly, who would you say is the Welterweight Champion? The Lightweight Champ? The Heavyweight Champ? I’ll bet you staggered on at least one—maybe all—of them. Yes, Mike, my choice of the sports’ biggest ailment has got to be the alphabet soup organizations.

From Frankie W., London, England

Q: Rumors have abounded for quite awhile that Prince Naseem Hamed was going to launch a comeback. Any news on this?

A: I’ve been hearing the talk for quite awhile, also. I do know, over the past two years, he’s been in and out of the gym. My guess is, if he were going to come back, he would have done it by now.

From Roger S., Fayetteville, N.C.

Q: Not even one year ago, I read somewhere that George Foreman was making plans to fight again. Do you think he really will?

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A: With Foreman, anything is possible. But I'd bet on Foreman coming back before Naseem Hamed does!

From Elijah B., Newark, NJ

Q: Who's your pick in the upcoming Floyd Mayweather-Zab Judah fight? I'm a big Judah fan and I really think he's gonna' pull off a major upset.

A: It's nice to dream!

From Eric F., Tampa, FL

Q: I have a bet with a friend of mine. He says you once picked Wladimir Klitschko for greatness. I say you didn't. Did you?

A: Eric. How much did you bet? If it was a lot, maybe your friend will let you pay on installments! Yes, once upon a time, I picked Wladimir Klitschko for greatness. But, after his victory over Sam Peter, and now with his fight against Chris Byrd coming up, who knows? Maybe not greatness. How about goodness?

From Andrew M., Honolulu, HI

Q: If you were still commissioner in New York, would you allow Thomas Hearns to fight there?

A: It's so easy to sit here and play top dog, but I know in my heart I'd turn Hearns down. What would he do? Sue the commission? Hearns, soon-to-turn-50, belongs working a corner, not sitting in one. He won on a 10th-round TKO in February. I pray he's fought for the last time, though.

From Michael L., Livingston, N.J.

A: Without question, Lucia Rijker is one of the greatest female boxers of all-time. Why do you think she never became as big a hit as she should have?

Q: I agree that Ms. Rijker was one of the greatest female boxers ever. I take pride that I promoted one of her fights in 1996. However, I believe she was not handled correctly, and thus her promising career suffered. She was supposed to have faced Christy Martin last summer, but a severe injury to Rijker's Achilles tendon kayoed her from boxing, perhaps for good.

From Gary T., Palm Beach, FL

Q: What do you think of Emanuel Steward as a boxing analyst?

A: I think Emanuel is fantastic. His analysis reminds me a lot of the announcing style of former HBO/CBS commentator Gil Clancy, whose excellence makes him stand out—even today—above the rest.

From Steve G., Glasgow, Scotland

Q: I pick up a lot of televised boxing from the states via ESPN and Showtime. Two of my favorite commentators are Al Bernstein and Teddy Atlas. Do you have a favorite between them?

A: I think both are terrific. Bernstein, of course, has been doing it since about 1980, right from the birth of ESPN. Atlas has been a boxing guy most of his life. I could listen to either one all night long. Ask me to make a choice, I'll go with Bernstein—he's a lot easier on the ears!

Hey, this was great, sharing some e-mail with ya.' We're gonna' do this again. Soon!