

## Sweet Dreams, Don't Let the Gym Rats Bite

Written by Phil Woolever  
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Floyd Mayweather, Jr made his "grand entrance" into the shiny Wynn Resort, where state of the art accommodations would be suite.

Zab Judah staked out his opulent territory at Caesars Palace, a remodeled classic with new wave wings.

Anyone crashing at the Thomas and Mack remained to be seen.

With over 15,000 tickets already gone a sellout was predicted, but a day before the fight it didn't seem that a noticeable sector outside the boxing world much cared. There appear to be enough aficionados to ensure a successful promotion nonetheless.

Maybe the lack of mainstream recognition coincides with Opening Day and the free MLB Preview. Maybe it's Tiger's emotional prowl for his dad at the Masters.

Maybe the Vegas odds makers have it right, and Floyd is such an obvious favorite to prevail that his victory seems a foregone conclusion.

There's always a chance that pay-per-view sales will be surprisingly strong, but that could be a more questionable wager than underdog Judah at this point.

Still, most rational observers know that a major fight card remains among the most exciting sports scenes there is. One of the stories regarding this promotion holds that various casino VIPs were polled regarding the event. When a profitable majority approved with their concierge confirmations, all systems were go with such smooth greasing that Don King and Bob Arum simply jumped on for the ride.

Perhaps we should look to the prominent gamblers to sort out the heavyweight division. A Wiseguy Federal Commission.

It might be Judah's best shot on the boards if sports book prognosticators measured somebody's chances by pre-fight lodging conditions. Wynn Casino, like Mayweather, still has yet to prove all that glitters is gold. Caesars, like Judah, has proven long-term qualifications.

The only problem for Judah is that unlike him, Mayweather has never shown up as less than a peak performer. Therein may lay the vapo-rub.

Action should come down to who appreciates just what the fight could mean in both present and future terms, from gym rat recognition to cable TV marketability.

Mayweather has been uncommonly cordial, at least appreciating the public relations opportunity. His theme song beat refers to consistent improvement, both personal and in the

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mitts.

Judah was reported as everything from intensely focussed and fine-tuned to shattered and unstable from the pressure of facing Mayweather and looming financial woes.

Our guess to an outcome lies in a simple boxing quiz.

Somewhere within the first few minutes, or seconds possibly, of the match, Mayweather will flash a perfect combination and a pattern will be set. That resulting pattern will be:

- A) Judah crumbles
- B) Judah is unfazed and emboldened
- C) Judah responds and we get a strong Fight of the Year candidate
- D) All of the above

We'd like to run with D, since that was always a lucky letter for our old Vegas schoolboys. However, B is the most likely answer. A good effort by Judah will probably fall short, but he can very well re-elevate his reputation and earning power.

A very strong undercard features Jorge Arce against Rosendo Alvarez, as old and new guards of the flyweight class get it on. Arce was a solid favorite around 3-1 at the betting counters, but don't sell Alvarez short. While Arce is a much more polished, battletested performer, we can't forget the magnificent, come-from-behind stoppage Michael Carbajal scored in a Tijuana bullring.

Alvarez, 37-2-2 (24), has been in tossups with the best, the very best, as personified by Ricardo Lopez, again and again. One could say a faded Carbajal is the best Arce has faced, and look what happened. Don't forget Arce's recent, initial war of attrition with Hussein Hussein, where victorious Arce didn't look like the winner after the fight. If Alvarez gets off to a strong start, there's a decent chance he could get a cut-caused type of TKO. But, if Arce, 43-3-1 (33), continues to look like he did when he crushed Hussein in their rematch, he'll probably come out completely unscathed, and the odds on him would have been a bargain even at twice the price.

Juan Diaz, 28-0 (14), defends his WBA Lightweight title against Jose Miguel Cotto, 27-0 (19), in another contest that could easily steal the show.

Julio Cesar Chavez Jr., 24-0-1 (18), meets Tyler Zolowski, 8-2 (6). Junior is looking nowadays for more than name recognition, but that will take a substantial move up in opposition.

In many cases, big fights at Thomas and Mack have been more spectacles than spectacular. But that was also true before Manny Pacquiao and Erik Morales met there in January, so anything classic is possible. Usually, though, it's some prelim gem like Arce-Alvarez that ignites the fans' passion.

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By the time tonight's gloved up stars enter the ring, it's a pretty safe bet the standard for action will be high. Let's hope each principle got a good sound sleep and vitalizing rest, no matter the blanket's thread count. If "Pretty Boy" and "Super" throw at their best, it will be a sight to remember.

At check-in time, Mayweather and Judah could resort to anything. Each man will definitely try to leave the lights out.