

## Garbage After Dark

Written by Evan Korn  
Saturday, 30 September 2006 19:00

---

Jorge Arce/Hawk Makepula?

HBO, is that the best you could do?

Seriously, with young, hungry fighters like Allan Green, Jason Litzau, Demetrius Hopkins and Chad Dawson waiting in the pipeline, Arce-Makepula is what we get?

I understand why you did this. Arce is an emerging 115-pound superstar with dynamite in both hands and a flamboyant disposition. Against a live body, say Vic Darchinyan or Martin Castillo, he is must-see television.

Against Makepula, Arce was the host of the latest "Boxing After Dark" infomercial, where the suits at Home Box Office kowtow to the requests of promoters. The Arce fight, promoted by Bob Arum, is nothing different than what has been going on after dark for years; precious airspace being given to house fighters in mismatches instead of the major risk/reward bouts that separate contenders from pretenders.

But it wasn't always this way. Once upon a time, "Boxing After Dark" stood for something. Legends like Arturo Gatti and Marco Antonio Barrera burst into the public eye on these broadcasts.

Prospects battled prospects.

Battletested ex-champions fought their way back into contention.

Behemoths like Derrick Jefferson, Kirk Johnson and Michael Grant looked like the next heavyweight hopes.

Fighters were discovered.

Frauds were uncovered.

Competitive matchups were the norm, not an aberration.

Then, a depressing thing happened on the way to the forum.

House fighters, the guys who were already armed with multi-million dollar HBO contracts, used Boxing After Dark as their personal Betty Ford clinic. After a devastating loss, they would fight on BAD to string together a couple of easy wins before their next lucrative pay-per-view assignment.

Marketable prospects (Jermain Taylor) were given the opportunity to pad their records against a

## Garbage After Dark

Written by Evan Korn

Saturday, 30 September 2006 19:00

---

litany of has-beens and have-nots.

As a result, we were subjected to the following bouts from January 2004 through February 2005: Taylor-Alex Bunema, Antonio Margarito-Hercules Kyvelos, Fernando Vargas-Ray Joval, Vargas-Javier Castillejo, and Wladimir Klitschko-Eliseo Castillo. None of those bouts were competitive, none were compelling, and the only thing they accomplished was padding the bottom line of HBO and a slew of appreciative promoters.

Then, by the grace of some higher power, HBO seemed to get it. They truly did. They revamped the BAD format, hired a broadcast crew headed by the polarizing Max Kellerman, and promised to return this revolutionary show to its glory days. For a while, you kind of believed them.

In April, Acelino Freitas-Zahir Raheem kicked things off. Great fight on paper, putrid inside the ring. Next month, Jhonny Gonzalez-Fernando Montiel promised to make things right. Once again, great fight on paper... you catch my drift. By the time Vivan Harris toyed with geriatric Stevie Johnston in July and Paul Williams massacred over-the-hill Sharmba Mitchell in August, I realized, as the Four Tops once did, that it was the "Same Old Song."

Sure, you can't blame HBO if the fighters don't come to fight, as was the case with the Freitas and Montiel bouts. While there is an element of luck involved, great fights used to fall out of the sky after dark.

Fights like Gatti-Ivan Robinson I and II, Erik Morales-Daniel Zaragoza, Barrera-Morales I, and David Tua-Ike Ibeabuchi created devoted followers (myself included) of this sport. As the years go by and BAD just gets badder, it makes one yearn for the good 'ol days of 1998.

Now, their competitors are starting to turn back the clock.

ESPN, with a fraction of the pay-cable giant's budget, features Peter Manfredino and Allan Green in separate fights Oct. 14.

Showtime's BAD-modeled series, ShoBox, has been beating HBO at its own game for years. Prospects like Andre Berto, Sechew Powell, and Anthony Thompson all have received valuable exposure on their airwaves. In October, the semi-finals of the ShoBox Super Middleweight tourney will give further publicity to some hungry fighters looking to climb the ranks. In November, Junior Welterweight prospect Kendall Holt takes on Issac Hlatshwayo in a crossroads battle.

But this disparity in quality should come as no surprise. HBO, with its big pockets and the even bigger contracts they dole out to their house fighters, has been failing at its own game for years. They used to uncover diamonds in the rough on Boxing After Dark. Now, the diamonds are being mined elsewhere.

As I watched Arce dismantle Makepula, all I could think about were the good old days, when Saturday night BAD cards were worth staying home for—remote in one hand, cold beer in the other. And since I was too young to appreciate an icy longneck when BAD was good, I can only

## Garbage After Dark

Written by Evan Korn

Saturday, 30 September 2006 19:00

---

imagine what it must've been like. Next time HBO tries to force some garbage down my throat, don't expect me to relax on my La-Z-Boy with a beer in hand—there are too many better things to be doing after dark.

*(Evan welcomes any questions or comments at [fightwriter44@yahoo.com](mailto:fightwriter44@yahoo.com) )*