

Rants, Raves and Irritability

Written by Scott Mallon

Thursday, 25 January 2007 19:00

Heavyweight contender Samuel Peter has now defeated James Toney twice in heavyweight title eliminators. He has also paid the WBC's sanctioning fees twice; both times thinking a win would secure a title shot against Oleg Maskaev.

If it walks like a duck, quacks like a duck and looks like a duck, it probably is a duck, but in boxing, ducks bark. In boxing, the definitions of interim, mandatory and champion would insult Daniel Webster to the point where he would end up penning a novel instead of a dictionary.

Emeritus: retired or honorably discharged from active professional duty, but retaining the title of one's office or position: dean emeritus of the graduate school; editor in chief emeritus.

Vitali Klitschko made a whopping one defense of his WBC heavyweight title and apparently made such an impression, he was given the Emeritus title. This is bad enough, but allowing him to skip to the head of the line adds insult to injury.

Dino Duva has made his thoughts clear on the subject: "Any thought or mention of him (Vitali Klitschko) or anyone else trying to step in front of Samuel Peter's path to the title is very dangerous legally and financially for anyone who goes there. We will not stand by and allow Samuel Peter's rights to be violated."

The biggest fight might end up in a court of law.

Having an Emeritus Champion is one thing, but only in boxing can a fighter who has never won a single professional bout challenge for a title.

This is the sport I love, the sport I grew up watching on TV and a sport I have practiced and been around all my life. Maybe my view of boxing has changed over the years or maybe the sport really has changed as drastically as I think; I suspect it's a little of both.

But the vast majority of people involved with the sport, and most importantly boxing's fans, feel there are too many weight divisions and too many championships. It seems the only ones who don't think this way are the sanctioning bodies and those who work for them.

Even the most serious boxing fan can't tell you all of the names of the champions or their respective divisions. Fat chance we'll ever see the ABCs reducing them, though. Why is it there always seem to have some half-baked explanation for their barking duck?

Granted, the sanctioning bodies are not the only ones to blame for the troubles in the sport of boxing; but they're one of the major problems. Surely, they have a good idea of what fans think and they know what's right and wrong, what's acceptable and unacceptable. Surely they know what is fair.

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Perhaps practicality and the almighty dollar get in the way...

Some simply ignore the alphabets, some think they'll fade away and some think they're not important. If they weren't important though, they wouldn't have had such a profound effect on the sport. Profound.

Oh yea, they'll fade away – when the well runs dry.

Maybe we should be happy there are fights taking place at all, but what happens when the sanctioning bodies run out of letter combinations?

Remember this equation like you remember $2 + 2$: The greater the number of weight divisions and championships available = the greater the potential revenue stream for the sanctioning bodies. It's strictly business.

So if boxing is a business, where are all the satisfied customers?

They're buying elsewhere.

Boxing's customer base is dwindling, scared off by the histrionics caused by the sport's politics. Boxing isn't dead or dying but it's certainly ill.

Serious boxing pundits from days gone by would be rolling over in their graves if they were alive to see the current state of boxing. More specifically, they'd be aghast at the number of weight divisions and champions proliferating in their beloved sport.

Practically every fight now is for some sort of title. Of course, justifiably so – yeah, that's the ticket, it's justifiable. Some argue it's become a necessity but if you believe this, I've got some swampland to sell you.

Interim – an intervening time; interval; meantime: in the interim.

Nowadays, there are interim championships taking place when the “regular” champions are willing and able to fight. An interim championship is understandable if the champion is injured – but regardless of the reasoning, making an interim title fight simply to get one fighter in the ring with another is unacceptable.

Nowadays, there are Argentineans fighting for Asian-Pacific titles and Americans and Azerbaijanis fighting for Latino titles.

Certainly good for boxing, don't you think?

When I refer to a rulebook and state I can't seem to find a certain rule, I'm given administrative, political masterpieces like “Oh, you won't find that clause in the rulebook, it's an unwritten rule” and “your rulebook isn't the same as the one we have.”

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As far as I know, there are not meant to be special rulebooks with unwritten rules that can be applied whenever the situation is considered warranted.

I've been told "It's not about the money, it's about giving fighter's the opportunity and honor of fighting for the title."

Frankly, the most honorable people in boxing are the fighters, but most champions prefer to win a legitimate title instead of one worthy of being thrown in the trash. Most fighters, though, are not in a position to turn down a fight, much less one for a title.

Imagine a line-up of champions, all throwing their ABC belts in the trash because they've decided enough is enough...wouldn't it be nice?

I've been told "you don't understand how boxing works."

Maybe, but the one thing I've never heard a sanctioning body say is "we'll waive the sanctioning fees for this one" or "we don't need this championship, it's overdoing things, better we scrap it."

So around and around the sanctioning bodies continue to go, where and when they'll stop, nobody knows. When will enough be enough? When will someone, something or some unstoppable force of nature step in and say, "Ok boys, we've had enough of this hanky-panky, hocus-pocus, mumbo-jumbo. Let's get our sport back to the way it's supposed to be." Maybe I'm dreaming, but hopefully I'll see this in my lifetime.

But I'm not holding my breath.