

Shannon Briggs, Trash Talkin' Champ

Written by Michael Woods
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What a darned, dirty shame.

You have Shannon Briggs, one of the most compelling trash talkers in the sport, one of boxing's best entertainers, taking part in a title fight on June 2nd, and practically nobody will see it. Briggs is a mountain of a man who should be marketed as the athletic poster boy for asthma awareness, a Brooklyn native whose severe rags to modest riches story just made the New York Times Magazine.

He's fighting Sultan Ibragimov, a silver medalist in the 2000 Olympic Games. But no network would pony up sufficient funds to televise the event, and the bout, in which Briggs' WBO title (which he wrested from Sergei Liakhovich last year in a snoozer made into a doozy with Brigg's final round flurry) is up for grabs, will be offered on a PPV basis.

God, how I hate writing that sentence.

I'm really tired of writing that sentence.

I'm resisting the urge to go off on a tangent here, because Briggs, as usual, was entertaining during a Thursday afternoon conference call to hype the June 2nd date in Atlantic City...

Screw it, I'll not resist, but will try to keep my digression session brief.

Promoters, you must work every legal angle, and work to secure rights fees, and TV money, and sponsorship and ad money, SO JOE Q. FAN CAN STOP GETTING WHACKED ON A MONTHLY BASIS WITH ADDED PPV CHARGES ON HIS/HER CABLE BILL. Get creative, do your jobs, and understand that very, very few people are going to buy this card (and I use the word "card" with hesitation, because promoters almost never stack their cards with an enticing undercard anymore, for reasons that completely escape me). Stop blaming this entity and that, stop blaming the state of the sport, and do something about it. Our wallets need some rest, OK?

End rant.

Briggs, age 35 ½, who escaped the almost inevitable clutches of a downward spiral that comes with being from a fractured family, with parents who struggled with incarceration and drug abuse, was supposed to fight Ibragimov on March 10. But Briggs (48-4-1, 42 KOs) came down with pneumonia, and the fight was delayed as his lungs repaired themselves.

Briggs got lathered up on the call as he tried to rip Ibragimov's promoter, Leon Margules of Seminole, a new one. Briggs ranted that Seminole portrayed him as a coward, and gasp, tried to foist the indignity of a coach ticket on him! Truthfully, his ire bordered on the comedic, and his promise to "decapitate" the 32-year-old Ibragimov (20-0-1, 17 KOs), and his wish that the dislodged head would fall on Margules' lap, wasn't exactly goosebump-inducing.

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"This is personal now," Briggs said, but 25 minutes into the call, the entire troupe had dissolved into giggles as The Cannon fired off one liners.

Briggs doesn't think much of Ibragimov's talent base, as he termed him a "bum," and said that his 7-28-06 draw with Ray Austin is a stain on his resume.

"Ray Austin was my sparring partner," Briggs said. "I used to knock him out every day."

Briggs' best line came when he said that the hurting he'll put on the southpaw Sultan, who will be outweighed by fifty pounds on fightnight, will make the Russian-born hitter wish he'd never laced on gloves.

"When it's snowing, he'll want nothing to do with gloves," Briggs cracked.

His second best line came when he was asked if he was happy he was a heavyweight, and didn't have to subsist in ice chips prior to the weigh in.

"I eat like a pig," he admitted. "I don't give a s*^#@. I'm an emotional eater."

Hey, I think we may have uncovered a closet Oprah fan!

SPEEDBAG Briggs' expert manager, Scott Hirsch, foresees a scenario where his guy beats Ibragimov, then is matched with Sam Peter, who he thinks will beat Maskaev. Then, with two belts around his waist, Briggs would lure Klitschko or Chagaev into a title consolidation bout.