Written by Michael Woods
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The 82nd Annual Boxing Writers Association of America awards dinner took place on June 8, at the Copacabana in New York City, and the event was a smashing success, if for no other reason than Bob Arum and Freddie Roach and Shelly Finkel all attended the function, and managed to limit the manifestations of dislike for each other to facial expressions.

Yes indeed, everyone got along, and the desired intent, to celebrate the sport, its participants and the kings of the keyboard who chronicle the stranger-than-fiction goings on, was met.

Here's my take on the dinner, which will always stand out in my mind as the first time my wife Jessica and me left our baby Annabelle at home, and went out on the town. Annabelle was looked after by Jessica's sister, Marisa, and her fiance, Joe, so we were of clear head in our finest evening wear as we trekked from the F line stop at 34th street to the Copa on the west side of the city.

Brian Kenny of ESPN oversaw the awards and kept the night moving along at a pleasant pace. We all gathered together to celebrate the "nobility and excellence in this crazy sport," BK stated.

He called for Juan Diaz, the Baby Bull, to hand off the first award of the night, the Taub Award for excellence in broadcast journalism.

Steve Albert from Showtime snagged this honor, and gave a pleasingly self-deprecating speech. This was his second Taub award, Albert told us, as he'd swiped the 1992 bauble from Jim Lampley, and has it proudly displayed at his residence.

This award numbered 100 for the Albert family of sports broadcasters, he said. 98 have gone to Al, while Steve and Al have one each. Albert said that he was jumping for joy when he learned he earned the Taub, and called Marv to crow.
"How'd you get this number?" Al thundered.

The Albert patriarch was a Brooklyn guy who loved the sweet science, Steve explained. The matriarch of the family was pleased that her boys all congregated to the tube, as she could easily keep tabs on where they were.

Ever the reportorial type, I noted as I surveyed the room that Larry Merchant was seated at a different table from the rest of the HBO family. I wondered if I should read anything in to this, as Merchant's contract status was up in the air at the time.

Albert busted Jim Gray's balls, saying he couldn't make it because he was hanging with Pete Rose, and gave Chico Corrales a shoutout. "Rest in peace, Diego Corrales, you'll be deeply missed," he said.

Kenny then got off a zinger after Albert departed stage right, stopping with one of the RoundCardGirlz to get a photo snapped of the occasion.

"My favorite moment is looking at Max Kellerman in the audience and realizing he was nominated and lost," Kenny joked. Kellerman, he hoped, will have a Susan Lucci-esque run of bad luck.

Tommy Gallagher took to the mike, and negotiated the TelePrompTer flawlessly while introing the Futch-Condon Award, for trainer of the year.

Freddie Roach took the vote this year, and set a mark for shortest acceptance speech.

"I have two people to thank, my father who taught me to fight at age six and Eddie Futch," Dedham Freddie said. "A lot of Eddie rubbed off on me, that's why I'm where I am today. Thank you." Just when we were about to get the hook to yank the rambling Roach off the stage, he mercifully ended the filibuster.

Al Bernstein set up the Pat Putnam Award for perseverance in overcoming adversity. The 2006 recipient was Muhammad Ali, who was not in attendance. Angelo Dundee, his sagacious chief second, was due to accept the award in his absence, but, we learned, couldn't make the trek because his wife Helen is ill. Ron DiNicola, president of Ali Enterprises, stepped in. He told the crowd that the award would spend the summer with Ali, then head off to the Ali Center in Louisville.

Ron Scott Stevens got misty during his acceptance speech for the Farley Award, for honesty and integrity.

The former matchmaker/cabbie/editor was psyched that he was reading a 'prompTer for the first time in his life (and a digressive shoutout must be given to BWAA president Tim Graham for stepping up the swank factor in the event). "My parents instilled in me an obligation to behave fairly and decently," he said, choking up. "My father passed away when I was 23, my mom when I was 39. Their spirits are with me especially strongly tonight."

Stevens, named chairman of the NY State Athletic Commission in 2003, admitted that he'd dreamed of standing in front of the boxing writers for many moons.

"Thank you from the bottom of my heart," he said.

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