When I heard that Kelly Pavlik and Jermain Taylor would be getting it on again, but that the middleweight title wouldn't be in play, because the rematch would be contested at 166 pounds, I was disappointed.

Doesn't that diminish the event, I asked Taylor's promoter, Lou Dibella.

No, Dibella said, the fight stands on its own merits. There doesn't need to be any belt on the line.

I'm firmly behind that line of thinking now, as it becomes more and more clear to me that the titles are largely irrelevant, that the fans know the matches that need to be made.

At BB King's club in NYC on Tuesday, Pavlik and his team, and Team Taylor (minus Taylor himself, who welcomed his third child with the wife into the world on Monday afternoon), convened to hype the Feb. 16 sequel. Laila Jayden hit the scale at 8 pounds, 9 ounces, and the fighter stayed with the momma because she had a slight fever.

The first fight, a stunner in Atlantic City, featured a battle of undefeateds. Only Pavlik (32-0, 29 KOs) has a blemish free record now, as he shook off a second round knockdown and Taylor's furious finishing attempt to roar back with a TKO 7 victory.

The rematch will take place in Las Vegas, and be offered on PPV at $49.95.

Perhaps the most noticeable storyline shift from the first fight is the status of Taylor's trainer. The Emanuel Steward experiment, not a smashing success by any means, is kaput, and instead Taylor's father figure/co-trainer Ozell Nelson will take the reins as primary guide.

Nelson, a likeable, humble sort, told TSS that his guy was "very disappointed" and "angry" about the Sept. 29 loss, and is reinvigorated about the fight game. "He wants this fight, and we'll learn from the loss and we're going to correct things," Nelson said.

Steward's hefty client list factored into the move, Nelson said, but it went beyond that.

"Things were going good in the gym, but the night of the fight, there was a communication gap in the corner," he said.

So, Nelson was asked, how what will JT being doing differently, without Manny, as he looks to get back on the winning track, at 166 pounds, which could theoretically help him more than Pavlik.

"The goal is to keep his hands up," he said, "and not be backing straight up, and be in better shape. (During that second round knockdown and assault) he pooped out. Now he's got to sit

back and take the guy apart instead of going wild."

Taylor (27-1-1, 17 KOs) did a phone-in, and said he's pumped to get back on the horse. (Nelson told me Taylor has no chin worries, that it was mostly because he was gassed that he got caught, and that he doesn't need a confidence-builder in the interim.) "I look at boxing differently, and have a whole new love for the sport of boxing," the new pop said.

That's good to hear, from the fan perspective, because to hear Taylor talking about the benjamins in recent years was sort of sad to hear. Glad to hear he's juiced about the competitive aspect once again.

Pavlik seems pumped to prove the first win wasn't a fluke. "I'm going back to the drawing board, and we're going to work on the mistakes that were made," he said. "Taylor's going to be back with a lot to prove, and he'll be back with something to prove."

I talked earlier about the irrelevance of the belts, and that has to include the Ring belt that editor Nigel Collins was trumpeting at BB Kings. Not that we should necessarily look down more at the Ring's move toward being a sanctioning body, just because the sport's most visible presence, Oscar De La Hoya owns the publication, and there is an inherent conflict of interest at work. After all, their ratings make tons more sense than the alphabet gangs' do. But um…no middleweight title is on the line during this rematch so what exactly is the point in Collins' getting on the stump at this press conference again?

Taylor, it turns out, will train in Vegas, away from familial distractions, so Nelson says that should help his chances. The extra weight should aid him too, as he's struggled to make 160 for several years now, though I'm certain the 6-2 ½ Pavlik will welcome the opportunity to chow an extra couple hundred calories a day as well.

SPEEDBAG Got to love Arum. I do, I admit. He's of that age that he doesn't give a rat's behind about insulting people. He tossed a thinly veiled slap at Oscar and Golden Boy for snapping up too many Mayweather/Hatton tix, rather than letting them go to fight fans on a first-come, first-served basis. "I didn't take 5,000 tickets and Lou didn't, so they aren't available to the public," Arum said.

---Another storyline I love about this fight—the dueling "no name" trainers. Jack Loew has been by Pavlik's side for his whole career, and Nelson, who's been with Taylor since JT he was 13 years old, aren't in the Steward-McGirt-Mayweather sphere of reputation. But that doesn't mean they aren't the absolute best options to work those fighters' corners. It may be that no other trainer, no matter how superb in Xs and Os, can get more out of these men than Loew and Nelson can. Loew, by the way, told me he was out sealing driveways one day after he came back to Ohio from Jersey after the big win. Any worry that the win and the prospect of financial security leads to an inflation of ego? "My wife wouldn't let me get bigheaded," Loew told me. When JT had Pavlik on tequila legs in the second, Loew saw a future that looked a lot like his past. "All I saw was black driveways," he said. So, there was no extravagant purchases after the AC triumph? "No. I had bought a new Lincoln after the Miranda win on May 19. Hey, I hadn't had a new car in 47 years!" Dude, you earned it.