

TSS Closer Look: Post-Fight Interviews

Written by Raymond Markarian
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One of the best parts about watching boxing is the post-fight interviews.

Who a fighter calls out, or how he reacts after a controversial victory always creates good drama for boxing fans.

At times it is humorous. The fighter that loses seems to think he was robbed most of the time, while the guy that wins brags about his invincibility.

Perhaps post-fight interviews are entertaining because of the authenticity. Mike Tyson's desire to eat people's children and escape to Bolivian would probably not be expressed if it were not for the beauty of a post-fight conversation.

No other sport engineers and relies upon trash talking to the extent boxing does. In reality, many fights are made when a triumphant boxer runs his mouth instantly after victory. Ricky Hatton beats Jose Luis Castillo, talks bad about Floyd Mayweather, and the Hatton/Mayweather fight is created a few months later.

Bernard Hopkins defeats Winky Wright, calls out the name of Joe Calzaghe, and a light goes on over the heads of the powers that be.

(Oh, Joe Calzaghe said he wants to fight Roy Jones now, great! Let's set up an interview with Jones to see what he has to say.)

Post-fight interviews can be so compelling because fighters are emotionally vulnerably inside the ring. They try their darnedest to keep their guard up against their opponent and drop their guard, physically and emotionally, when they have exited the danger zone. There is little time for advisors or managers to prep the star before an in-ring conversation with Larry Merchant, or Max Kellerman, or Jim Gray, and so what we often get is an athlete, emotionally naked, blurting the first thing that comes to mind.

Many times, the winner of a fight makes empty promises during a post fight interview, especially after a controversial decision or an entertaining fight when everyone and their mother cries for a rematch. When a cooler head prevails, and a boxer and his manager realizes that in no, way, shape or form is a rematch a good idea, oftentimes a promise gets tossed out the window.

Take the Lennox Lewis vs. Vitali Klitschko fight in 2003. Over six compelling rounds, the two combatants beat each others' brains in throughout one of the best heavyweight boxing fights in over a decade. After the fight was stopped because of a nasty cut over Klitschko's left eye, the principles of boxing rules awarded then champion Lennox Lewis the victory even though he was losing on all three scorecards.

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During Larry Merchant's interview with Lennox Lewis in the ring, Lewis said he would happily beat Vitali again and eat his brother for breakfast. But nothing happened of the sort. Soon after the fight, Lennox Lewis retired and the heavyweight division was left searching for magic.

Some fighters are known for their clear-minded honesty after a hard-fought scrap, guys like Miguel Cotto, Kelly Pavlik and Shane Mosley. Others, like Muhammad Ali, Mike Tyson, Prince Naseem Hamed, and more recently David Haye, can make a cruddy fight that much more satisfying by capping the evening with a humorous, or surprising, or inspired rant.

We as viewers sometimes get fired up when a fighter complains of an opponents' supposed wrong-doing, but we should always be mindful that things said in haste, delivered while the adrenaline still runs heavy, should be taken with a grain of salt.

Sometimes we viewers grimace in despair the moment a fighter embraces his own greatness after a lackluster performance. But we must also remember that it is hard for someone to be objective about themselves. How often during an average day do we engage in harmless delusion, to spare ourselves a perhaps deserved mental spanking?

The, oh so popular, unfulfilled retirement announcement was the trend a few years back and will always have a place in the sport. Every fighter, from Floyd Mayweather and Bernard Hopkins to Oscar De la Hoya and Tito Trinidad threatened to call it quits after a fight, only to return into the ring fairly quickly. We have caught on to the falsity of false departures as of late.

We should not blame a fighter for putting up his guard when a commentator is throwing out questions in pointed fashion.

(When Larry Merchant asks a fighter how it felt to get knocked out, how do you expect him to react?)

The most essential element to watch during a post-fight interview is the realism. There is a purity evidenced between the fighter and commentator during that short unrehearsed conversation that cannot be compared to any other sport.

There was a palpable sensitivity shown when Buster Douglas cried for his mother immediately after he defeated Mike Tyson or when Meldrick Taylor was at a loss for words while Lou Duva was screaming in Larry Merchant's ear after Taylor lost the fight of his life against Julio Caesar Chavez.

Good post-fight interviews can be viewed as the climax in boxing events. The fighters that candidly expose themselves in those interviews create an everlasting image to our boxing memory bank. The look of embarrassment on De La Hoya's face when he lost to Shane Mosley in their second fight is just as classic as the shock in Jermain Taylor's voice when he beat Bernard Hopkins for the first time.

All of us watching marvel at the physical feats and mental strength of these masterful athletes. And we also take cues from the fighters, in how to act in victory, and in defeat. The boxer's

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behavior after a shocking win, or loss, tells us so much about them, and helps us figure out who we are, and who we'd like to be.

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