

Tarver And Dawson Getting Surlier

Written by Rick Folstad

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They skipped over the pleasantries Tuesday, avoided any kind of verbal handshake and went straight for the jugular, leaving a string of f-bombs in their wake while they argued over who was going to do what to whom. And how many times he was going to do it.

Conference calls can be fun, but they're not for the entire family. Don't let the wife and kids get on the line. It's not church chat.

Former WBC light-heavyweight champ "Bad" Chad Dawson (26-0, 17 KOs), owner of one of the catchier nicknames this side of the Seven Dwarfs, implied that maybe Antonio "Magic Man" Tarver (27-4, 19 KOs) was going to be getting a butt kicking in their IBF light-heavyweight title fight on Oct. 11 on SHOWTIME at the Palms Casino Resort in Las Vegas.

Tarver pretty much disagreed with Dawson's keen assessment of the situation, mentioning that Dawson has never been in the ring with a guy like Tarver, and will be lucky to get out alive.

Things went downhill from there, but only if you don't like interruptions, obscenities and veiled threats, with just a sprinkling of answered questions.

Some of us like a little voice raising. Too much politeness on the line and you have to keep slapping yourself to stay awake.

There was no problem staying awake on Tuesday.

Starting out, Dawson said his upcoming fight with Tarver was "by far" the biggest fight of his career, that it was a chance for him to make a statement and to prove he is the best light-heavyweight in the world. He even gave up a title belt to fight Tarver.

Tarver didn't rank the fight quite that high. He said he's been fighting big fights most of his life, and this is just another one of the biggies.

"They think they're going to have a walk in the park," Tarver said. "But I've got a lot of Chad Dawsons on my resume. He doesn't have one Antonio Tarver on his. He's going to get a crash course on what it's like to be in there with a legendary fighter."

Tarver, rumored to possess a hearty ego, called Dawson a "decent" fighter, but reminded everyone that it takes more than a decent fighter to beat him.

"The bottom line is, on the night of Oct. 11, an old man is going to teach a young boy new tricks," he said.

This fight and these press conferences are another chance for Tarver to remind everyone who he is. He's one of the best fighters in any division, but he claims he's never gotten the notice

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and the rave reviews he deserves. He's the forgotten man in the fight game, a name most people can't place right away.

But he's getting used to being slighted.

"How many times do I have to beat it into their heads that I'm the truth before they come out and admit it?" he said. "They've been denying me and doubting me my whole career. I've always proved them wrong. The stage is set for me to quiet all my (doubters) and for them to bow down once again and eat crow."

Fun guy.

But Tarver is right. His popularity quotient is somewhere north of the Big Bad Wolf and just south of Scrooge.

Maybe part of that reason is because Tarver's song is a tired one. The whining gets a little old. But he is right about one thing. He's quieted more than a few of us at ringside, and I've tasted more than a little crow.

While Tarver always holds court at these things, grabs the moment and hates to give it back, Dawson has always seemed the quiet one, the guy who sits back and lets the other guy rant.

"I ruin fighters," Tarver said. "They're never the same once they go 12 rounds with me. They're damaged goods. There's a disease going through the light-heavyweight division called the post-Tarver syndrome, and you're going to get a taste of it Oct. 11, trust me."

Apparently, Dawson had heard enough.

"You talk a lot of game, man, but that night, you can't talk. You've got to back that (stuff) up for real," Dawson said. "You keep running your trap. The night of October 11? Just keep that in the back of your mind."

One of the better lines of the conference call came when Dawson described Tarver as being "slow and old."

"Age is nothing but a number," said Tarver, whose number is closing in on 40. "I know some 26-year-old fighters who are already shot. In fact, I'm on the phone with one right now."

A little humor is nice.

Have a nice day, guys.