Written by Michael Woods
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They are burning the midnight oil in the White House, the Obamas, Geithners, and Bernankes. They are buying tubs upon tubs of ink, and firing up the printing presses, 24-7, printing more currency as they work to prop up a faltering economy and to stave off a full-scale depression. They have attended to the sub-anemic housing sector, and the lenders, and the automakers, and sent lifelines to drowning citizens in the form of unemployment benefit extensions. But the best and the brightest minds haven't hit on one most obvious method to right the economic ship of the United States economy, a revenue generator whose presence guarantees a state of liquidity and employment that should send the Dow popping 250 points when the Wall St Journal realizes what is in front of our face: that the return of Floyd Mayweather to boxing is the shot of steroids our faltering economy desperately craves in order to bounce back from a vicious recession that has left most citizens lighter in the pocket book and heavier of mood.

Yes, Wall Street, take heed. Barrons, stop the presses and put him on your cover.

"Money" is back in circulation. Mayweather, the 32-year-old Michigan native with a 39-0 (25 KOs) record is back in the game after a 14 month hiatus; he told media at a New York press conference to hype his July 18 comeback scrap with Juan Manuel Marquez at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas that he is returning to reclaim his spot as the pound for pound best. Floyd said that his bout with Marquez will determine who the P4P jefe is, because in his mind, Marquez has had the better of Manny Pacquiuao, who lays atop most every P4P pundit list, in their two tussles.

Floyd strode to the dais on the 80th floor of the Empire State Building in midtown Manhattan to the strains of Queen's "WE Are The Champions," and he did indeed go out of his way to compliment Marquez, the 35-year-old Mexican hitter who has morphed from a counterpunching cult fave into a seek and destroyer sort who should be able to make Mayweather wish intermittently that he'd stayed "retired."

Mayweather squeezed a handgripper as he listened to Golden Boy's Riachard Schaefer hype the bout.

"Thank you for coming back," said the humble Schaefer, "for bringing energy and spark back."

And let's not forget money, in case any of you are under the impression that money isn't far and away the main reason that these sorts of bouts get put together. It ain't for bragging rights, as Mayweather and advisor Leonard Ellerbe are quick to state…

Schaefer shared some math with the media, and told us that in his last two fights (against ODLH in May 2007 and Ricky Hatton in December 2008) Mayweather generated 250,000,000 in revenue, when all monies are tabulated. The Golden Boy CEO said that Mayweather will provide a boost to the economy, which has been retracting since the middle of 2008, and certainly a few jobs have been added to handle the Mayweather/Marquez media tour, which

touches down in London on Thursday.

We can argue, or debate, how much revenue Money brings to the table, and how meaningful he is to the sport, of course. Oscar De La Hoya and Ricky Hatton, two superior seat fillers, danced with the star, Mayweather, so to say that Floyd alone spurred a quarter bill of business isn't accurate. I checked Oscar's face when Schaefer pointed to Floyd as the "one person" responsible for this deluge of green, but Oscar had his best poker face screwed on.

De La Hoya spoke and he tabbed JMM as the top P4P boxer working today. Everyone in this promotion is working off that talking point, and the video accompaniment to bolster this claim certainly helps make a strong case that JMM deserved better than a loss and a draw against Pacquiao. Then again, no one edits sports better than HBO, so we'll let Manny-Maniacs and JMM backers hash that argument out, until Manny/JMM 3 in 2010.

Then, JMM got the mike. In halting but understandable English, he said he mostly liked to let his fists do the talking for him. And, interestingly, he never stated that he would beat Mayweather. For what it's worth…

Mayweather then told the media he came back to "dominate." He weighs 146 or 147 pounds, so he said he isn't worried about making the 143 pound catchweight. He hit 147 pounds versus Hatton, and was 150 for Oscar. 143 or under would mean he would weigh the least he has since he met Arturo Gatti in June 2005 (139 pounds).

Floyd looked ultra fit, and said his retirement agreed with him. He was able to let his hands fully heal, and he wasn't sad to get off the treadmill of business which ruled his life since 1987, he said.

"I needed a break as a human being from 1987 to 2007," he said. No, the reason he came back isn't because the IRS has grabbed all his money, he said. He still owns a 23,000 square foot home in Las Vegas, he stated. It is because fans were clamoring for his re-entry in the sweet science, coming up to him, asking him when he'd glove up again. He told the media that he truly didn't know if he was ever going to come back when he said he was exiting the game, in June 2008, rather than taking on Oscar in a rematch.

You may recall he exited the game guns a blazin', telling The Grand Rapids Press in an interview that HBO "is great," but criticized its announcers.

"They talk about Kelly Pavlik, a white fighter, like he's the second coming. Or they go crazy over Manny Pacquiao. But I'm a black fighter," Mayweather said. "Is it racial? Absolutely. They praise white fighters, they praise Hispanic fighters, whatever. But black fighters, they never praise. I've noticed it for a long time but I couldn't say anything because I had to do business with them. I'll still do business with them, but I'm done holding my tongue."

There was no rancor, no hints of lingering bad blood, as HBO sports boss Ross Greenburg greeted Mayweather warmly when Money came on stage. TSS asked Floyd about that exit slam, and wondered if he still believes race plays a part in the perceived lack of respect

Mayweather has harped upon, and touched on Tuesday. He did point out that HBO's announce team gave Oscar De La Hoya too much credit in their battle. But mostly, he didn't care to go there. "You tell me," he said. "I don't know, you tell me."

Floyd did reference certain behind the scenes matters that he doesn't care for, but didn't want to "spill the beans" on the specifics, so it is clear that some of the politicking and hassles that annoyed him pre-hiatus are still present. Overall, though, he sounded pretty pleased to be back.

"Boxing is a brutal business but it's a classy brutal business," he said.

No, that hiatus didn't mellow Mayweather it seems, when it comes to his quite healthy ego. "I am boxing," he stated, which will be news to Manny Maniacs. Then again, he is back in contact, regular contact, with his father Floyd Senior. They hang out and shoot pool regularly, he said, though of course they aren't tighterthanthis, not after years of back and forth sniping. Mayweather pointed to his father's incarceration for putting him a step behind the times, but for now, they are getting along.

The June 18 bout was at the forefront of everyone's mind, but a showdown with many Pacquaio, if and when Floyd does away with Marquez, wasn't too many steps away. "All roads lead to Floyd," Ellerbe said when asked about how pie-slicing between Mayweather and Pacquiao would go, this after Freddie Roach has indicated that Manny is the main moneymaker in the game today, and the purse would need to reflect that: "Manny is gonna get the short end of the stick but he will still get the most of his career. Manny needs Floyd, Floyd don't need him."
Money echoed that. "All roads lead to Floyd Mayweather," he said. "I'm the cash cow." Just in case Pacquiao wants too much, Team Mayweather is setting a place at the table for Miguel Cotto. Floyd slapped Cotto promoter Bob Arum. "I think Arum wants Cotto to lose," Mayweather said, because Cotto butted heads with Arum over the MargaCheato brouhaha.

Some fight fans will focus on the Money/JMM scrap from the top P4P angle, while many folks will wait til Floyd and Manny meet up to go there. Indeed, the promotion is tagged "Number One, Numero Uno" to play up the P4P angle, but Ellerbe and Mayweather both back off that subplot somewhat. "We don't fight for bragging rights," Ellerbe said.

Yes and no. Mayweather makes no bones about wanting to be handsomely compensated for doing his thing. But he is clearly fixated on his legacy, both all-time and in the current context of the game. He brings up the fact that Pacquaio has three losses and a draw on his ledger, while his resume is blemish free. To him, pointing that fact out isn't about bragging rights, it is about correcting the faulty record, about remedying the misperceptions he feels he's been unfairly saddled with.

My bottom line is, I am pumped to have Money back in circulation. He stirs up the pot, he forces me to think about my views as a fightwriter and human being, and he makes it pretty darn easy to churn out a two thousand word story.

Welcome back, Money.

SPEEDBAG I had a nice chat with NY State Atletic Commission chair Melvina Lathan. She set up a symposium which took place on Monday at pace University. About 15 boxers and another dozen officials checked out “The Business of Boxing: Why Financial Planning Is Important.” Loys of basics were discussed, Lathan said, but I think most of us could use some remedial schooling on matters of finance, with all the debt the average American adult holds. “I think we found a friend in Pace,” Lathan told me. She said she will continue to set up symposiums and such to help fighters arm themselves with knowledge. I like her style, and it is obvious she cares about the boxers, so I’m always happy to talk shop with her.

24/7 fans, the first installment of the Money/JMM show runs on June 27 at 9:30 PM, before Boxing After Dark.

---I studied Oscar at several junctures during the press conference, seeing if I could discern a hint whether he’ll fight again. When Schaefer introed Oscar, De La Hoya went to the mike. There was a tepid smattering of applause. “C’mon guys, sit down,” he said, acknowledging the mellow reaction. Will he miss the electric buzz one gets when all eyes are on you enough to give it one more go? I say yes.

---Yes, “retirement” hasn’t softened Mayweather or his ego. He growled that he didn’t want to do more interviews with Sports Illustrated unless they put him on the cover. SI’s Chris Mannix is one of those guys that quietly does his job with zero muss or fuss, and he gracefully absorbed the vitriol. Since he doesn’t have a say in cover subjects, Money would be advised to take it up with higher ups over there. At first I didn’t know who he was referring to when I heard him ranting at the tail end of the press conference, after 40% of the press had exited, but then I realized that he’d been on the cover of ESPN Mag, and has been on any other cover that it makes sense for him to be on.

---Stay tuned for a solid video interview I did with Paulie Malignaggi. I’ll post that soon. I also have a great one of David Haye and Manny Steward I will post before the Wlad/Haye beef.