

Kenny Missed Some Openings, But Mayweather Didn't

Written by Frank Lotierzo
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Floyd Mayweather Jr. is showing to be Ali-like in one sense since coming out of his scripted retirement. That is, he provides those who follow and love boxing plenty of content. It appears Mayweather may have created his own brand--in sparking debate among fans, fighters and writers as to just how great he is or isn't. One thing's for sure, not only is Mayweather one of the smartest fighters of his era inside the ring, he's just as smart outside of it. While retired he was all but forgotten. Since his return he's dominated the scene like he never did before. And as long as he's out doing interviews and talking about his upcoming fights, it'll be written about here.

The things I mention below as to what could've been asked came to my mind as I was watching the Brian Kenny/Floyd Mayweather interview from last week. This isn't a case of Monday morning quarterbacking. I acknowledge and respect both Brian Kenny and Floyd Mayweather Jr. as professionals. That said, I'm an opinion writer and they're both in the public eye. Below are my thoughts and observations as to the interview they recently conducted.

Last week during the Mayweather-Marquez satellite press tour, Mayweather was interviewed by ESPN's Kenny. The interview got off to a rough start when Kenny accurately introduced Mayweather as the former number one pound for pound fighter in boxing, to which Mayweather took exception. This illustrated how insecure Floyd is when confronted with certain truths regarding how he's perceived among his critics in the boxing community.

Mayweather started off by admonishing Brian Kenny's opinion and questions, because Kenny has never laced up boxing gloves. (Ed. Note: Kenny in fact trained at Cus D'Amato's gym for five years.) Which was an obvious cheap shot. I fought for seven years and was in training camp working with fighters the likes of Michael Spinks, Dwight Muhammad Qawi and Bennie Briscoe among many others. No doubt having fought gives you an added dimension that those who never did can't possibly have, but it doesn't take a fighter to observe that Mayweather has avoided the biggest challenges to him in his division. It only requires someone who's an informed observer that follows boxing. Some of the most insightful boxing minds I know belong to guys who never fought or trained as a fighter. The reality is most fighters only care about what's going on with and around them. So Mayweather's juvenile tactic came off pretty lame.

During the interview Mayweather was defensive and appeared to be looking for a war of words in order to divert attention from the legitimate questions Kenny was attempting to ask regarding who he's fighting. Watching the interview it struck me --had Brian Kenny been interviewing greats such as Alexis Arguello, Roberto Duran, Julio Cesar Chavez, Aaron Pryor, Sugar Ray Leonard or Thomas Hearn those same type assertions never could've been made. Instead of trying to find out if they were going to fight the best and most dangerous fighter out there, it would've been conducted from the perspective of when and where.

The surprising thing to me was Kenny, who follows boxing and isn't awed or intimidated by Floyd, missed some obvious openings that would've enabled him to expose Floyd for who he is.

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Granted, I know interviewing a guy like Mayweather is a difficult thing to do when he's already pre-determined that facts and actuality have no place in his world. It was just frustrating to see Floyd given the latitude of using his verbosity to dance around the substantive issues.

Some of the things that stuck out:

One thing Kenny nailed was saying, "Floyd, you got full credit for both of those wins, (De La Hoya and Hatton) that's why you became a superstar." Yes, I couldn't agree more, Floyd Mayweather wasn't considered the face of boxing until he beat a part-time fighter/promoter (De La Hoya) along with an undefeated junior welterweight (Hatton) who he fought at welterweight.

However, I think Kenny could've addressed Mayweather's typical bravado and subterfuge better. I would've mentioned because Floyd kept bringing up his victory over Oscar De La Hoya, that maybe Pacquiao beat him when he was an empty package, but Shane Mosley took him apart more convincingly than you seven years earlier.

Mayweather said, "I'm too big for Marquez but I'm not too big for Pacquiao. Which one is it?" Kenny said that Pacquiao was 130 pounds and keeps moving up and whacking guys, he gets full credit. I would've retorted that Pacquiao won his first title weighing 111.75 pounds as a flyweight, four divisions and twenty pounds below Mayweather, who weighed 131 in his pro-debut. Instead, he let Floyd say he's moved up from weighing 125 pounds, which is outright dishonest.

Mayweather also asked Kenny, "Has Pacquiao been out-boxed by Erik Morales?" To which he responded yes. But he also could've suggested to Floyd that if he out-boxes Pacquiao maybe it shouldn't be considered such a feat since Morales was on the decline and fought Manny closer to his more natural weight when he did it.

Soon after that Floyd said he doesn't fight for bragging rights, in order to suggest why he doesn't need to fight Shane Mosley. Then he was reminded by Kenny that Mosley is the welterweight champion. This prompted Mayweather to mention Mosley has five losses and Shane isn't a PPV attraction. If there was ever an opening for a follow up it was there.

Kenny could've taken Floyd apart by saying 'You challenged Winky Wright in 2005 and made demands that were unrealistic so the fight couldn't be made. Mosley had no trepidation fighting Winky twice. You never fought anyone close to a Vernon Forrest who was undefeated and thought to be a later generation version of Thomas Hearns when Mosley fought him -- twice. As far as Cotto, Mosley fought him on even terms just as some think you did Jose Luis Castillo the first time. On top of that Mosley fought a Cotto, you turned a deaf ear to him when he was undefeated and hadn't yet endured a beating from Antonio Margarito.'

He could've gone on and said, 'Floyd, if you fought every fighter Mosley did, how many losses would you have? Conversely, if Mosley fought every fighter you have would it be fair to say he'd be undefeated too?' And regarding PPV, Kenny could've reminded him De La Hoya was the draw and took home \$45 million when he fought Mayweather, Floyd netted \$20 million and let's see when Floyd next grosses \$45 million for a fight, like Oscar. Lastly, Ricky Hatton was

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the draw because he brought half the UK with him when they fought. Did it occur to him to say Floyd, 'You're a big draw as long as Oscar De La Hoya and Ricky Hatton are your opponents.'

Later in the interview Mayweather spewed how Cotto beat Mosley, Margarito beat Cotto and Mosley beat Margarito, going on to say all these guys are beating each other but none have beaten me. Right here is where I believe Brian Kenny could've obliterated Floyd Mayweather but choose not to. I would've said, "Floyd, you haven't fought one of those three opposed to them fighting each other. Of course they haven't beaten you, but neither have you beaten them. There's a perception out there that you turned a deaf ear when they called you out, yet you heard and responded to Juan Manuel Marquez?"

Then Mayweather had the gall to say he never ducked or dodged any fighter. And in Kenny's defense he tried to pin him down to who he'll fight after Marquez, to no avail. And in sticking to form Floyd once again danced around it and mentioned how he has an issue with Bob Arum that may prevent the fight with Manny Pacquiao.

The only thing the ESPN interview accomplished is the fact that Floyd Mayweather Jr. is comfortable in the role of playing the bad guy for at least his upcoming fight and most likely the one after that. Due to the fallout from Mayweather's interview, Brian Kenny did a short interview with Shane Mosley on ESPN Friday Night Fights. Did anyone besides myself notice the respect Mosley commanded because of what he's accomplished in the ring with his fists. This is opposed to Mayweather, who clearly showed he's not as secure in his career accomplishments as Mosley is his.