

Boxing Gets a B-12 Shot--No Swine Flu Vaccine Needed!

Written by Michael Woods

Wednesday, 16 September 2009 19:00

When Andre Ward heard that five promoters all got on the same page with Showtime and crafted the Super Six World Boxing Classic, he might have been tempted to do something he never does, as a truly God-fearin' gentleman: let loose a barnyard epithet.

Instead, he muttered something along the lines of, "Dang!"

We are only a month away from the first fight of the first round of the tournament, when Carl Froch faces Andre Dirrell and Arthur Abraham meets Jermain Taylor, and I am tempted to mutter something stronger than "Dang" because this whole thing hasn't come apart. Call me a cynic, or label me a realist, but one has to suspect that there is no way, shape or form that we'll get through this whole deal, which is supposed to culminate in 2011, without one guy moving up in weight, one guy retiring and one guy trying to jump ship for easier passage to easier money. But what say we revel in the concept in its full form while we can?

Fortune may be on the side of the Sixers, if we judge by the manner in which Mikkel Kessler and Andre Ward made it through their respective warmup scraps on Sept. 12. Kessler enjoyed a KO4 win over Gusmyr Perdomo in Denmark, while Ward took out Shelby Pudwill in the third round of their battle in California. Neither Kessler (age 30; 40-1) nor Ward (25; 20-0) were cut, or scratched, or pulled a groin, or have any reason, as of now, that will keep them from testing each other on Showtime on Nov. 21. The boxers shared at a press conference at Oakland's Oracle Arena, where they will clash, and then got on the phone for a media call.

Boxing's "It" promoter, Dan Goossen, started it off by acknowledging that the Dane is favored by fans in the know. "The favorite in this tournament is Kessler," Goossen said on the call. "There's no doubt about it. As a matter of fact, the experts have already made their picks: Kessler, (Arthur) Abraham, (Carl) Froch, Jermain Taylor, and then it's Ward and (Andre) Dirrell, the two young pups. So it's a big challenge for America right now. But Ward's going to be up to the task and I think at the end of the day there will be two Americans left standing in that inaugural World Boxing Classic Championship bout."

A large segment of TSS U is beyond a flag-based rooting system. Sure, many of us identify that much more with a boxer who shares our ethnicity or lives in our region. But overall, we treasure performance, and don't much care if someone has skin the color of Barney the dinosaur if he is a master of the sweet science. But the Euro vs. American composition of the tournament will be a conclusive referendum on the state of our sport in the states, versus Europe's.

"It is easy for the public to pick the Europeans as the favorites because that is the safe pick, but they should go out on a limb and pick an American," Ward said. He admitted that he's been getting teary thinking about the stakes at hand. "I think about the (world championship) belt every day. I'm so passionate about winning a world championship that sometimes when I talk about it it brings tears to my eyes because I know it's my destiny—to be a world champion and

Boxing Gets a B-12 Shot--No Swine Flu Vaccine Needed!

Written by Michael Woods

Wednesday, 16 September 2009 19:00

not just an overnight sensation. You beat a guy like Mikkel Kessler and it is going to send shock waves through the boxing world and send shock waves through the Super Six. No one really believes I can win this fight. Some people are picking me and some people think I can pull it off, but really most people think he's going to win and I love that. That's what it's all about. Because when I do pull it off it's going to send that kind of impact through the Super Six Tournament and throughout the boxing world."

Kessler interestingly beefed that he had to come to the US to fight. "The fact that I have to come all the way over here was just a bad negotiation, but I want people to know that I am not afraid of fighting out of my hometown," he said. Some might wonder if fighting in front of his homies might not be such an advantage for the youngster, Ward. Kessler talked about an extra dosage of pressure that might be weighing on him.

"Being favored makes puts a lot of pressure on me because you have to win convincingly, but I am used to it," Kessler said. "Also, coming over here is big pressure too. Although it is Andre's hometown and he is a big name out here, it is a big opportunity. I am fighting the best fighters in the tournament. After this fight I will be hungrier in the second and third fights.

Those that are giving Ward a chance to beat Kessler do not cite a power edge for the 2004 gold medallist. They believe hand and foot speed makes Ward a live 'dog against the upright Dane. Ward seems to be of the same mind. "I think speed is one of my many keys that I will have to bring to the table in order to beat Mikkel Kessler. It's like Tony Dungy said: When you get to the Super Bowl, there's no time to change the style. No drastic changes will be needed."

Speaking of changes; we've delved into this before but it bears repeating. It's cool to me to hear Ward talk about tearing up, and to hear Kessler say, "I've got a lot of excitement in my stomach and I'm ready to fight on the 21st of November. The Super Six is a dream come true and I think I can speak for all of us on that." This tournament format has been a real B12 injection--no, not a swine flu vaccine!--for the sport. The fighters have been instilled with that much more energy, because of the tournament format. No one wants to come in last. The continent vs. continent angle is in play. Said it before, will not be afraid to be repetitive. Congrats to Showtime for getting their imagination in motion, and thinking big. With a little luck, all the Super Six will be blessed with their health and the tourney can stay on track into 2011. This being boxing, we expect some detours on the way, but we must always keep hope alive.