Written by Michael Woods
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Americans aren't a culture known for their proficiency at smelling the roses. We are a forward looking bunch, barely able to exult for a nominal length of time before we are proceeding to formulations for what comes next. Perhaps it is our system of capitalism which solidifies this tendency.

Great, Mr CEO, you made oodles of money this quarter. What about the next quarter? You have to top it!

We've all seen where that mindset has gotten us. That doesn't mean we will change our habits, though.

In sports, we tend to act in the same fashion. The confetti was still dandruff in Jeter's hair as reporters asked him about who the Yanks should re-sign next year.

But Yuri Foreman seemed to be doing a fine job of living in the moment, exulting in the aroma of his championship effort which came on Saturday night in Las Vegas. The Belarussian/Israeli/Brooklyner wore the mark of a man who'd engaged in combat, as 18 stitches on his left eye and a black mark on his right told anyone who saw the beaming pugilist at Prime Grill in New York City on Thursday that he earned his right to smile from ear to ear.

Foreman, who is studying to be a rabbi, sat with rabbi DovBer Pinson and spiritual advisor Joel Lion at the restaurant, but right next to Foreman was the man he referred to as "my second rabbi," promoter Bob Arum. The promoter broke into a grin about as often as Foreman as he chatted with reporters with fierce pride about the 29-year-old Foreman's unanimous decision win over WBA junior middleweight titlist Daniel Santos on the Pacman-Cotto undercard. Clearly, this win was just as sweet, maybe sweeter for Arum, than Pacquiao's mixed blessing win against Cotto. Both of those men are contracted to Top Rank, so one's victory means a tumble in stature for the other. But really, the Foreman win was a bit more than business for Arum, I believe. For the 77-year-old dealmaker, a Jewish American, Foreman's win had to strike him from a different angle.

Jews have to do a lot of counterpunching in many parts of the world, our own melting pot included, and so over the years Arum has had to combat anti-semitic volleys from haters. One can infer that he feels an immense personal pride as one from his tribe overcame a pronounced lack of pop and sniping from critics who called him "Yuri Boreman" and recommended him as a cure for insomnia to become the first Israeli to win a world title.

"I'm carrying the flag right now for Israel," said Foreman before he tucked into a plate at the restaurant. "It's been a dream of mine since I was ten to win a world title."

The kid has to get props for his perseverance, if nothing else. He started training in an Arab gym in Israel--talk about throwing yourself into a lion's den. No, there was no shortage of willing

sparring partners looking to "help" Foreman learn the finer points of pugilism. He turned pro in January 2002, and was brought along skillfully, but slowly, to the point where critics started to multiply. They'd grouse that he was more story than anything, that he built a glossy record on a weak foundation of journeymen. The critics had a point; his stiffest test before Santos was Andrey Tsurkan, and that was a split decision victory. But the turtle-paced buildup and sniping is old news now. Foreman can point to the belt at the "Boreman" brigade, and inform them, if he chooses to score a verbal counter, that a fight with Manny Pacquiao might be in the cards for 2010.

"I would love to fight Manny Pacquiao," Foreman told TSS. "I would give Pacman the opportunity to fight for his eighth title. I have mad respect for Pacquiao and think he's one of the best fighters ever. I haven't had a chance to talk to Bob Arum about it, but I will."

In fact, half an hour later, Arum talked about the potential for a Foreman-Pacquiao scrap. The promoter said he'd like Foreman to defend his crown a couple times, and then maybe entice Pacman to look for that eighth crown.

Arum blessed the meal before everyone tucked into steak, chicken and salmon. No word on whether he said a silent prayer that the numbers rolling in from Saturday's PPV would be adding to his glow. The promoter would be heading over to HBO's office a few blocks away after the meal to get some returns on PPV numbers. He'll hope that the numbers bolster leverage for he and Pacquiao, as the dance to make Pacquiao-Mayweather kicks off in earnest. If Pacquiao-Cotto does better business than Mayweather-Marquez, which did one million buys after expectations were in the 600-700,000 range, Arum and Pacquaio are in that much better shape. That tally came after an immense ad blitz, something in the neighborhood of $10 million, which is believed to be far in excess of money spent to plug Pacman-Cotto. There have been phone calls between the expected players, Arum, Richard Schaefer, Al Hayman and Leonard Ellerbe, but everyone's waiting to see the numbers before they start posturing. And, there will be posturing on both sides. Everyone talks about Mayweather's, but Pacman has his own pride and ego which will have to be attended to. Also, Freddie Roach has grown into a skilled negotiator, and will put his stamp on the formulation of terms. Will he be willing to accept even a 50-50 deal now that Pacquiao is armed with more leverage than Mayweather?

Back to Foreman, in the vein of what we touched on before, savoring the moment. Much credit for the Santos win has to be attributed to the behind the scenes work of the Top Rank staff. They lobbied hard for Foreman to rise in the WBA's ranks, so Foreman could emerge as a mandatory challenger for Santos. They realized that Santos would be not a soft touch, but certainly in a less than ideal place mentally and physically come fight time. Now 34, the Don King fighter had been on a one-fight-per-year run since 2005. He hadn't gloved up since July 2008, and rust, one imagined, could lessen his chances against the sweet science student with the above-average chin, Foreman. A few months back, Top Ranks' Carl Moretti went to Panama with two envelopes to enter a purse bid for Santos-Foreman.

"I had two envelopes in case someone else showed up," Moretti told TSS at the restaurant. "No one did."

The winning envelope contained a check for $162,500. Not a grandiose sum, but one that reflected the marketplace. Santos was a part-time fighter with a minimal fanbase, and Foreman had a compelling, novel back-story, but he needed to offer a showing which would appeal to more hardcore fight fans, not the casual sports fan intrigued by his "Lion of Zion" persona. Arum placated anyone referring to the writers who dismissed the sleep-inducing potential of the matchup by assuring that the human interest stories on Foreman would help the overall promotion.

The reviews weren't across the board raves, but to me, Foreman fought smartly and with enough aggression to win a healthy bunch of the unconvinced. Scuttlebutt has said that we'll see him tangle with another King fighter, Cory Spinks, who holds the IBF junior middleweight strap. Nope-- Moretti shot that down, saying another negotiation with King isn't a welcome prospect. So, Spinks is out, who then? Kermit Cintron is a possible, as is WBO champ Sergei Dzinziruk, or Pole Pawel Wolak. Moretti said he wouldn't hesitate to make Paul Williams-Foreman, either. Moretti said that he think Foreman might become even more of a fan-friendly hitter, as a 25% uptick in confidence could make the New York resident more willing to sit down on punches.

SPEEDBAG Puerto Rican fight fans are somewhat adrift with Cotto's demise at the hands of the typhoonesque Pacquaio. Miguel said he'd be back, but there are no guarantees, so more eyes will be trained on next gen hitter Juan Manuel Lopez, the WBO featherweight titlist. He was life and death with Rogers Mtagwa on Oct. 10, and left Madison Sguare Garden Theater with a win, just barely. Next up for 27-0 JuanMa is a Jan. 23 date, again at the Theater. He'll defend his crown against the former WBO featherweight champ Steven Luevano, a fellow lefty and a 37-1 slickee with minimal pop (15 KOs). Yuriorkis Gamboa (16-0) will again share the bill with JuanMa, as they did in October. The Cuban will take on Mtagwa (26-13), and look to blow him out, to provide a stark contrast to JuanMa, who needed luck and prayers to stave off an upset loss.