

JEAN PASCAL: I Know Grampa Hopkins Will Be Ready

Written by Michael Woods

Tuesday, 21 September 2010 19:00

Many of us get frustrated that boxing seems stuck in the past, that not enough marquee fighters are being generated to keep the sport fresh, and current. We see elder statesmen continuing to get the ink, and the dates, which too often are shown on a pay per view basis. Too often, those elder statesmen offer uninspired performances, and another batch of fight fans break off their love affair with the sweet science. After so many dates of dinner and a movie result in a peck on the cheek on the doorstep, and no invitation for a nightcap...well...Dana White is always game to invite a fight fan in for an adult beverage.

The suits will tell you that the market makes decisions for them, that fans can choose to purchase, or spurn the purchase of PPVs involving the likes of Shane Mosley and Bernard Hopkins.* These suits have a point. All we who dont care for the predisposition towards putting so many competitive fights on PPV is call attention to it, and hopefully the suits will see our side of the argument, and work on placing content where more people see it, and recession weary consumers dont have to empty their wallets annually to be a boxing fan. That isnt all that can be done to inject new blood into the sport...the up n comers can do more to hasten the demise of the old dogs who cling stubbornly on to the pound for pound lists, like Wilford Brimley does to the lard that contributes to the diabetes which gives him a platform to endorse medical equipment and insurance. The young guns, guys like Jean Pascal, the Haitian-Canadian who fights Bernard Hopkins on December 18, can push the issue. They can send a message, a brutal, concussive one that cant be shrugged off, that this is a sport in which middle-aged men dont belong.

The WBC 175 pound champ Pascal sounded to me like hes up for the challenge when we chatted on Wednesday morning. The 27-year-old hitter, who is coming off a signature win, against Chad Dawson on Sept. 14, said he has no influence on whether or not a fight lands on pay per view, but he does have the power to show Hopkins and the world that he is the man at 175 pounds.

Dawson and Hopkins were seen as the top two in the division, he said. After I beat those two, there is no doubt everyone will know who Jean Pascal is.

The fighter, who came with his mother and older brother from Haiti when he was four, says that he expects the best Hopkins has to offer. I watched the Hopkins-Jones fight. People said the same thing, that the man is almost done, before Shane Mosley beat Margarito. In boxing, you can never know what can happen. The last two fights Hopkins didnt look great, this time he might look great.

Pascal understands the fans frustration that new talent hasnt seized the day, wrested the baton from the oldies. He says his showing against Hopkins will send a potent message.

I want to show Hopkins this is the start of a new era, he said. I want to be the new face of boxing. Mayweather, people mention, hes not the new face. He has maybe one, two, three

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fights left. This is a big challenge. But in life, you need big challenges, because that gives you big motivation.

There was talk that Pascal would beef with Lucian Bute, the IBF 168 pound champ, who also calls Quebec home. It would be an immense tangle, the Super Bowl of Canadian boxing. Pascal says we shouldnt get our hopes up to see that, even though he says he wants it. Bute is really good, not great. But I dont think he wants any real challenges. (Bute, 26-0, fights 35-5 Jesse Brinkley on Oct. 15). By the time Bute is ready to fight me, I think Ill be a cruiserweight.

Pascal isnt a huge banger, with a modest 16 KOs attached to his 26-1 mark. (The lone loss came to Carl Froch via UD12 in December 2008.) Not sure how TSSU sees this fight playing out, but I wonder if Hopkins wont be able to clutch, grab, keep the tempo and tone to his liking, or if Pascal will show even more of the fierceness that we saw against Dawson, and look to conclusively take out the 45 year old Philly fighter, who turns 46 on January 15. Not that he really will have to, some would argue, since hed possibly be served some home cooking with some (subconscious) partisan judges in his hometown, Quebec. (TSS-EM calls for Pascal to simply outhustle Hopkins, and take a wide UD.)

TSS asked Pascal what type of fight we will see, and to describe his fighting type.

I have no style, Im versatile, he said. I can adjust to any stile. I can be a brawler, I can be smart, I can do anything.

Asked if he expects Hopkins to try and get an edge before the bout with headgames, Pascal huffed, Hopkins is good at that, but hes coming into my world. I dont play. I dont get intimidated by anyone.

I see this task as being a potential lose-lose for Pascal. If he wins, he beat up an old man. If he loses, he lost to an old man. He chooses not to see that potential downside, and wont train to scrap with a faded athlete.

You can definitely call him Grampa, Pascal said, with a chuckle. But I know Grampa will be ready.

*= One fight friend of mine offers this analogy, to point out the ludicrousness of the arrangement, whereby an HBO or Showtime deems a product inferior, and not worthy of purchase, so instead of shuffling the deck, and offering a more attractive bout to the networks liking, the promoter moves the bout to pay per view. Its like if ESPN felt some content wasnt good enough for their website, and so they instead put it on their Insider tier, where you have to pay extra to read it, my pal said. Or if the most inferior merchandise in a store was put in a separate room where you had to pay to browse. My friend offered another analogy which cracked me up, but it involved a paid escort and...this is a family-friendly website, and I cannot share. Sorry. LOL.

The strikeout-with-the-networks-so-well-move-it-to-PPV strategy doesnt force anyone to buy a card. But I think it does take advantage of the love affair fight fans have with the sweet science.

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We crave competitive fights, so well pay, sometimes more than out discretionary spending budget should allow. But too often, we dont get our perceived moneys worth...How long before we turn off too many fans, and the fan pool dries from a pond to a puddle?