

Brandon Rios Trying To Say Goodnight To The Bad Guy

Written by Eric Raskin

Tuesday, 22 February 2011 21:30



Rios' fighting skills, as he showed here against Peterson, have impressed us. His mouth, less so. When a sports star does something stupid—and from those who sext sack shots to those who bring guns into the locker room, we don't have to look hard to find examples—he has three public relations options:

1) Deny, deny, deny. Either by going the “I'm not here to talk about the past” route or by insisting that's not your voice talking dirty to your wife on the foot fetish video, you pretend to know nothing in hopes that the controversy will just evaporate if you leave it alone long enough.

2) Apologize. This works best if you're sincere and you act quickly (in other words, study the Tiger Woods press conference and do the opposite). But even if you're not sincere, the idea is that you tackle your stupidity head-on, you admit to your failings, and if possible, you sprinkle in a little humor (see “Grant, Hugh”).

3) Embrace the negativity. From Jack Johnson to Dennis Rodman to Floyd Mayweather, there's a history of athletes becoming bigger draws by going out of their way to make people hate them. You probably want to stop short of doing something to get yourself thrown in the clink, but otherwise, be as bad as you wanna be and it just might make you filthy rich.

Last November, Brandon Rios found himself momentarily atop boxing's most-stupid list, staring down the barrel of these three options after allowing himself to be videotaped performing an impression of iconic trainer Freddie Roach experiencing Parkinson's tremors.

At first, Rios and cohort Antonio Margarito played the denial card, claiming to be unaware that Roach had a disease. That didn't last long; nobody was buying it. Whenever there's video evidence working against you, Option 1 is tough to pull off.

So it became a choice between apologizing and trying to shake the sudden “bad guy” image, or taking the bad guy act to the next level and, like Mayweather, trying to sell tickets by being the fighter people will pay hard-earned money to root against.

For Rios, that was not a difficult choice at all. The lightweight contender sincerely felt bad about what he'd done to Roach. And though he admits to being an idiot at times, he doesn't consider

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himself to be a bad person and isn't going to try to play a character that doesn't represent who he really is.

"It's not that I'm trying to be a bad guy or a good guy. If people like me, that's good. If they hate me, oh well. I still have to do my job," Rios told TheSweetScience.com. "I play around a lot, I make jokes, that's just my personality and that's just who I am. I'm just being myself, whether it sells tickets or not. And people that know me very well, they understand that I mean no harm.

"Look, everybody knows Freddie, I knew he has a disease. But it's not like we were making fun of him about the disease. It was just between camps. His camp was getting heated with ours, and so we got heated with theirs. He was making fun of Margarito, wearing metal gloves, stuff like that, so it just got to a point where we did a low blow, and it was really bad. You know, I looked at the video, I realized I messed up, made a mistake, but everybody makes a mistake in their life and everybody can change from it. If people still want to criticize it, let them go ahead, it's all right. It's not bothering me. I already said my apologies, I didn't mean no harm to anybody."

As soon as the video went viral and the feces hit the fan, Rios went to his manager, Cameron Dunkin, and they agreed that a public apology, if sincere, was the way to go. They were in Dallas for Margarito's fight with Manny Pacquiao, so undercard fighter Rios used his press conference pulpit to express his regrets.

"He went up there and he gave a sincere apology—and a lot of people didn't believe him," said Dunkin. "But he learned a lot. He learned about shooting off his mouth. At the same time, he said to me, 'I'll probably do something stupid again,' because he's that kind of guy. He's a f--- up, but he's a good guy. He'll always be there for you. He's never going to intentionally hurt a good person, it's not in him."

Dunkin compares Rios to another unpredictable but loyal fighter once in his stable, Johnny Tapia. Back in 2005, when Rios was still in his teens, Dunkin and his fighter were at a weigh-in where a gangbanger got in Dunkin's face and began threatening him, and Rios jumped in, returned fire with some threats of his own, and eventually found himself jumping over rows of folding chairs, chasing the thug away.

Dunkin's favorite Rios story is one that, in his mind, underlines the difference between "Bam Bam" and former Dunkin-managed fighter Victor Ortiz. Both young prospects were at a weigh-in for a card on which neither was fighting, and both were managed by Dunkin and trained by Robert Garcia at the time.

"Victor comes up to me at the end of the weigh-in," Dunkin recalled, "and I ask him, 'You want to get something to eat with us?' Ortiz looks at me and says, 'No, I'm going right home, I'm going to drink some warm milk, and I'm going to bed.' Come on. What a phony. I looked at Robert, like, 'Where does he get this s---?' So I looked at Brandon and I go, 'What are you going to do?' And he goes, 'I'm going to go get (intimate with a female).' I mean, out of those two guys, who do you love?"

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That was about five years ago. Now 24, Rios has changed in some respects. He's recently married to a woman about seven years his senior, Vicky, who has grounded him and helped him mature. They have a two-month-old daughter, Mia.

Rios used to be the type of guy who wouldn't train hard, but now he's gotten more serious about his career.

"I feel way different," Rios said. "There were questions about my boxing career because of the fact that I was always getting into trouble. But lately I've been in the gym and I've been doing my job, and my concentration and focus are much better. Since I got married, my wife, my newborn, they helped turn my life around."

It's showing in his pugilistic performances, as the inconsistent kid who struggled to a draw with opponent-type Manuel Perez in 2008 looked like a whole different breed of fighter in his HBO-televised coming-out-party win over Anthony Peterson last September. Now Rios prepares for the toughest challenge he's faced yet, this Saturday's bout on Showtime against Miguel Acosta.

Acosta turned heads with his upset knockout of then-undefeated Urbano Antillon in '09. He followed that with a kayo of unbeaten Paulus Moses for a lightweight alphabet belt. The 32-year-old Venezuelan hasn't lost in seven years and 19 fights. Rios may be the "A-side" to American audiences, but he's not necessarily the favorite to win.

Probably the safest thing to predict here is an exciting, competitive fight. That's what Dunkin is banking on—that if Rios can pull out the win, he'll acquire more fans along the way and undo some of the damage done by his ill-advised Roach impression.

"I hope that when they see him fight on the 26th," Dunkin said, "they enjoy him and they go, 'You know what? He's not a science major, but this son of a bitch can fight and he's fun to watch and he's got a good heart.' He really does. He's the most loyal, good-hearted guy in the world."

That's a hard statement to swallow for those who only know Rios for the way he mocked a man with Parkinson's. To them, he might always be the bad guy.

Dunkin and Rios both say that's not who he really is, but it'll be up to Bam Bam to prove that over time. And that's just what he plans to do, even if it means missing out on an opportunity to cash in on his infamy.

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Radam G says:

Rios is young and crazy, not hazy or lazy or a bit dazy. Dude should win that belt. I can see him letting loose that craziness and saying "Goodnight f**king sweet prince," to his next opponent, as he knock him out. His behavior is what it is. But he is in the hurt bitnezz. And that doesn't not mean just in the ring. [Hurt 'em before da fight, during da fight, and if it is a need to, after da fight is just good business in this prize-fighting sports.]

Rios has given an apology for his goof. So people ought to move on, because more hurting words will probably be spittin outta his mouth sooner before later. Especially if it is the way to put butts in those paid seats. At least, Rios is no Rush Slimebaugh. Personalities come in the game with the persons. Jack Johnson, Mike Tyson and Brandon Rios became angry and got attention by rubbing people the wrong way long before they laced on those gloves. Just as Da Manny, Joe Louis and Sugar Shane Mosley were the humble type from the jump of their existence. Holla!

riverside says:

Good post Radam. I really don't see much people holding grudges for his ill imitation of Roach. Lets move on, Another weekend of boxing. The kid Rios is exciting to watch, he will have his hands full with Acosta. I've seen clips of Acosta, he is one sneaky counter puncher, Rios need to be careful chasing Acosta around the ring, he could get caught coming in ala Montiel. I'll be pulling for Rios.

brownsugar says:

Ditto Riverside.....I respect those who were offended by Brandons actions and I can understand why... especially if you live with or know someone effected by Roaches disease. But I get more offended when fighters don't act like fighters sometimes... for example,...Manny, Mosely, Ward, and Wlad demonstrate the gentlemans side of the game... but it's the caustic and offensive representations from true masters of offensiveness like Tyson, Floyd,..Mayorga, and Rios that compells us to want to watch somebody get thier arse kicked. If the villian loses (Holyfield vs Tyson) then all is well with the universe... If the Villian wins then we put more bad karma on the guy hoping that cosmic retribution catches up to him the next time (Margarito vs Shane or Manny vs Margarito,... Floyd vs the Nevada DA... whichever you prefer).

brownsugar says:

2009 and 2010 were seriously polarizing years of Love and Hate... Who remains besides Pacman to get us into the mood again. I hope they don't water down the self proclaimed f**Kup Rios.

admin says:

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Agreed. Kid is just that, a kid. The moronic stuff I said way back when!!!

FighterforJC says:

Brandon Rios, nothing special, good management, fighting all the right names at the right time, we won't be talking about him anymore after 2 or 3 years.