

Written by Michael Woods

Thursday, 24 March 2011 17:22

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*The promoter featured a massive grin after Martinez beat Kelly Pavlik in April 2010. His smiles have been a bit wider since Martinez emerged as a P4P player. (Hogan)* When Sergio Martinez shocked the boxing world, if not himself and his crew, and knocked the consciousness out of Paul Williams in Atlantic City last November, the power grid in boxing shifted more than a bit.

Martinez (47-2-2 with 26 KOs) is promoted by Lou Dibella, the former HBO exec who left that nest and has been making a go in the promotional waters since 2000. Dibella is right there in the mix with the Great Whites in the business, Arum, King and Golden Boy, but he's set himself apart, to a degree, because he doesn't eat, sleep, live and breathe the sport like maybe some of the others do.

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And let me be succinct...to me, this is a virtue.

Dibella, who lives in New York City, makes time to pursue other interests and passions, whether it be as the owner of a minor league baseball franchise the Richmond Flying Squirrels (AA-Giants); as the executive producer of the 2009 film, "Love Ranch," which starred Helen Mirren and Joe Pesci and received a theatrical release; or as a consumer of live rock music, of acts like Furthur, featuring ex Grateful Dead players Bob Weir and Phil Lesh.

I sat down with Dibella and picked his brain recently. Mainly, I was curious to see if the fact that he promotes a guy who can plausibly lay claim to being the top boxer on the planet, pound for pound, has changed his life to any large degree, and if moving forward he seeks that top dog slot currently occupied by Arum, and coveted by Oscar De La Hoya and Richard Schaefer.

"I do have a great deal of satisfaction, because no one believed in Sampson Lewkowicz and Sergio, and I did. And no, I don't really want that number one slot," he told me. "Right now Richard and I are friendly, but when we were sparring he called me a 'mom and pop' company. I don't view that as an insult. I probably have a closer personal contact than most promoters do with their fighters. When you're too big, you can't have that. I'm happy being in the situation I'm in now. I like being "small."

So, there's no sense of vindication in play?

"No. It's nice to be with a guy this good, and this loyal. It does give the company a lift. So does having Berto. The undue criticism he's had to deal with ends with his next fight, against Victor Ortiz. Having guys like this gives us more international recognition and exposure. Sergio has the ability to be the poster boy for HBO," Dibella told me. "He's the one guy with amazing ability who can fight regularly. He loves to fight, and he's in the prime of his career."

OK, we all realize Lou's got a dog in the hunt...but what about it, is the Argentine-Spaniard Sergio the best and brightest boxer in the game today?

"Yeah, he is right now," Dibella said without hesitation. "The most talented fighter alive is Floyd, and he might be an alltime great, but he hasn't been active in a year. Manny's great but he's been carefully matched, and he's been moved around weight classes skillfully. Every fight Sergio has taken has been huge recently. I have to say, I was shocked Ring magazine had Nonito Donaire ahead of Sergio in their rankings."

And Dibella expects even greater things for Martinez in the next few years. He told me he could see Martinez fighting the king at 168, when the king comes to the fore, in maybe a year and a half. The New York-based dealmaker said he's been talking to the Felix Sturm people, about a fight pitting Martinez against the WBA middleweight titlist. That fight could happen in June or July. Martinez loves to fight, isn't one of these dabblers who wants to lace 'em up once or twice a year for big bank, and spend the rest of his time waltzing around, playing big shot.

Peter Manfredo (age 30; 37-6) is another possibility for Martinez. The net started buzzing when his name was floated. Those opposed to the idea say the Rhode Islander would have no

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chance, and hate the idea. Dibella points out that this is a business, and that he could probably squeeze about 15,000 people into the Dunkin Donuts center, the arena in Rhode Island. "Hey, in his last fight, Sergiy Dinziruk put up a hell of an effort," Dibella says. "Sergio got touched up. He's 36, he can't do that every fight. Manfredo is also a really decent guy, and it'd be great to give him a shot. Also, he's a lot better at 160 than at 168. Sergio's got to be allowed to be a favorite in a fight!"

SPEEDBAG Dibella and I touched on the rapidly approaching Pacquiao-Mosley fight. I expressed some amazement that so many folks are coming out of the woodwork and giving Mosley a solid chance at an upset. I see no chance of that happening, and asked Lou his take. "Mosley is one of the best liked guys out there. And he can punch, so this helps explain why some of the sentiment has changed. People are thinking, If Mosley lands that big shot he landed on Mayweather, on Pacquiao, then maybe Pacquiao gets stopped. I still think Pacquiao is a prohibitive favorite. I can't see Mosley having enough left in the tank to beat Manny."

---If Berto does what I expect, and gets the better of Victor Ortiz on April 16th in Connecticut, what might come next? "We won't probably get Pacquiao or Cotto, but we're not afraid of anyone," Dibella said. " If Mike Jones wants to step up, and people are willing to pay, we'll do that."

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## **Radam G says:**

Money May is no doubt the most talented fighter in the game today, and no doubt an all-time great. But talent and being a future ATG don't always win fights, especially at 34-years old plus. Money May would beat 36-year-old Sergio Martinez SILLY! Martinez is aight and very LUCKY! But don't believe da HYPE about him. He was in the right place at the right time to get the right bum and drunk. And I hope that nobody beats the long-in-the-tooth, fighting-with-his-hands-down-and-his-chin-up Martinez, so that he probably would get a piece of Da Manny or Da Money "Make-it-Rain" May. Martinez is not really a hype. He can fight. But he is not in the category of superfighter. Just supertiming. And it is superjive and great promoting to make it seen like neither Da Manny or Da Money Raining May want any part of Martinez.

It is all about the MOOLA and right timing. Make the check BIG, BIG, BIG, and Da Manny kayos Martinez in about three rounds, and Da Money "Make-it-Rain" May -- one again -- beats Martinez SILLY. I agree that Martinez shock half of the world -- the know nothing crew and bandwagon jumpers of media built up of the next "most-avoided-and-feared fighter," who will turnout to be another dud. All da real dawgs of da game knew that Martinez would destroy Long-Tall, superhype Paul Williams. And if it difficult to drink and drive, it is even harder to drink and box. Two-Ton Tony Galento should get da arse pounded, while coming in the ring DRUNK and thinkin,' "I'll murda da bum." Holla!

## **miguel1 says:**

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mayweather does all his fighting with lawyers he is worthless, and no one is drunker than roger mayweather the man drinks from a brown bottle for breakfast. please....

**Radam G says:**

By the way, sometimes people cannot handle the medicine that they put out. And when you feed them that same medicine, they fade and fall like muthachump. Money Make can put out the speed and countering, but he can't take it. He doesn't like it. This is one of the real reasons that he stays away from Da Manny -- Da Speed and countering from weird angles. There is that another saying that "it takes one to know one." Pure science this is. Pure sweet science it would be for Money May to develop some cojones and take his arse thrashing like a MAN from Da Manny. Nonetheless, speed against speed brings up a different need -- courage. Wow! Money May need to holla at the Cowardly Lion and come outta dat enchanted forrest behind those apple trees. Let's throw some punches instead of insults, because a Money May arse thrashing will be the results. Holla!

**amayseng says:**

no way in God's green earth does floyd mayweather beat sergio...no way and no how. sergio has too much power, athleticism, speed and agility... floyds style will not mesh well with sergios...sergio at 154 mops the floor with the inactive, pot shotting aging fighter in floyd mayweather.....now 3 or 4 years ago this is a different matchup. but as today sergio is physically and mentally on his game and floyd is physically declining.....dont think so? ever seen floyd buckled like he was from a 39 year old inactive for 18 months fighter who shot a jab to the body and caught him with an overhand right???? thats a mediocre 1-2 in boxing and it almost ruined floyd..... like i said, sergio beats mayweather like a red headed step child....that southpaw stance and agility using angles cuts up floyds shoulder roll....

**FighterforJC says:**

If Mayweather can beat Martinez, Mayweather would've INSTANTLY challenged Martinez after the Paul Williams KO the way Mayweather did Baldomir and would've sealed the deal in 5 minutes.

**Radam G says:**

Money May is into prizefighting, not pridefighting. He would INSTANTLY put down super-athletic -- but not super-gifted and super-boxing -- Martinez for the BIG-PURSE MOOLA. I find it amazing to see people repeating and repeating and lipping and lipping the some thing year after year about DA DANG LATEST MOST AVOIDED AND MOST FEARED FIGHTER IN THEIR MEMBRANES -- I MEAN ON DA PLANET. The athletic type do well in any sport, but not GREAT! But the GIFTED does GREAT in his game.

Martinez has strong legs from his football -- soccer to Americans -- playing days. He has ZERO proper development of his shoulders and arms for elite professional pugilism. And after playing football for so many years, including his prime adolescent years, in which

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developmental greatness must be fed in a sport, and starting boxing late, he won't ever get. But DUDE is an arch-illusionist to fanfaronades, Pac-haters and Money May-haters. Martinez may get knocked out or beat down before he even get a taste of Money May. Money May would break Martinez's arms and cause Martinez to throw his shoulders out of socket. Wow! Hate can cause a psychological blindness more damaging than the one that foolish love causes, not to be mixed up with true love.

With those dangling arms at his side, Martinez would never get a chance to land a money punch on Money May. Martinez's "MONEY PUNCHES" work on superhypes and drunks. Martinez is getting more hype than Ricky Hatton got, before the "Hitman" lost, of course, to Money May and then Da Manny. As a young Hatton did, a long-in-the-tooth Martinez blows up to 200 pounds between bouts. And this is not GOOD, and is a tell-you-sign that Martinez has been lucky that the fighters he's fought are lacking da BIG SCORE. I will keep saying it, any decent fighter can look awesome against a soft opponent with a lot of media hype -- Paul Williams, one who started boxing late -- Kermit Cintron -- as Martinez did, and one who was an undercover drunk -- Kelly Pavlik. Nonetheless, when Martinez fought somebody who knew how to trap his arms and cause him to throw his shoulders out of socket, Martinez got KTFO! But I musta fo'got! Yall haters are going to say, "D\*mn! Margarito used "Plaster of Paris" against Martinez TOO! Whatever....! Boxing is stranger than fiction. And I just love the optical illusions that those in da know play on those who don't know -- in the words of Uncle Roger -- "SH\*T 'bout boxin!" Holla!

## **brownsugar says:**

I'm really diggin' Dibella,.. the guy has a keen eye and can see things the way they really are... which is refreshing after listening to the "either-you're-in-my-club-or you'll-never-work-in-this-town-again" rants of Bob Arum.....could it be possible?... A Promoter who doesn't want to rule the world,.. and accepts his place in that world. I have no problem with Martinez being or wanting to be the P4P #1... however I have just one tiny issue with Martinez,.. both Pac and Floyd reached their status by defeating other champs in their own weight class. In Fact out of the 19 championship contests Floyd has won,.. he was the smaller guy or at least the lighter guy in all but 2 of those fights... and even if Pac was carefully managed,.. he's been the smaller guy in all his fights for the last couple years now.... So while I can understand Sergio pulling on the bodaciously long coat-tails of Manny and Floyd hoping for the huge payday... lets be realistic... both Floyd and Pac became huge money earners by the way they beat guys in their own weight classes (and above)... not by calling out guys who were naturally 20lbs lighter than they were.. Let Sergio have a soft payday or 2,.. be an opportunist but spread the opportunity around....by taking on some real 160 pounders like Pirog,..Golovkin, N'Jikam, Korobov or even Sturms,.. there's no way Mike Jones, Berto, or the ultrasoft Chavez junior should be in Martinez's conversation.

## **the Roast says:**

Martinez is fun to watch no matter who he fights. In the last fight, even though Sergio was winning handily, that hands down style had me thinking that he could get nailed at any moment. He was down vs Pavlik and the first Williams fight so his chin is suspect. I gotta believe that

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Sergio won't be that careless against Kirkland or any of the top super middles. Pirog will be on ESPN3.com Saturday night from Russia. I need to see more of Pirog. Was Danny Jacobs just overhyped or is Pirog really good? I don't know. Time will tell. Sergio is too big and too fast for Floyd or Pacman. Sergio would fight them both for the payday, who wouldn't?

**brownsugar says:**

did anybody see the amazing Pirog today... what do ya think? can he take down the uprising star Martinez??

**the Roast says:**

I saw the Pirog fight, sort of. Missed a few rounds here and there. I think he's too robotic to catch Sergio. I'd like to see the fight happen. Sergio by UD. HBO should do it. Man that crowd was dead. What the hell instrument was that dude playing in the intro? The fight is still available on ESPN3. Skip the undercard. Snooze city.

**brownsugar says:**

I love seeing how people work play and entertain themselves around the world... I hope to see more of these "foreign" broadcasts from places we never get to see like Japan and Thailand where most of the straw-weight fighters compete... I thought the same thing Roast... the Russian audience is more jaded than Americans... looking bored and restless thru out the contest... Somebody came into the ring with Opera music,.. while another brought a Russian Rap Group that got way too much air time...and someone else used Roy Jones' "You Musta Fo'got".....Pirog had some guy dressed like Rasputin playing some type of traditional instrument.....Pirog came to play not fight as Pirog looked as if he was in a sparring match... nodding and grinning at this oponent...and letting him tee off at times.... he'll have to bring the intensity back if he wants gain the endoresment of the fans. But I think a fully prepared Pirog beats Martinez 7 out of 10 times... hope they can make it happen... Anyway,.. I don't want to hear about Sergio asking to fight anymore welterweights.

**the Roast says:**

That was something B-Sug .Interesting stuff. I do like looking at the way other counties do fight cards. That crowd reminded me of Tokyo. Buster is pulling of the biggest upset in history and you could have heard a pin drop. Good call on the Rasputin lookin dude. I havent seen that much of Pirog but I don't think he could beat Martinez on points. That herky jerky style would leave Pirog dazed and confused. Pirog would have to get to that ever dangling chin. I don't think Sergio would be as careless as he was in his last fight. I'd like to see how Serg would deal with a strong pressure fighter like Pirog.

**brownsugar says:**

we can only hope Roast... but if Pirog turns in another uninspired effort,.. he gets moved further to the back of the line.

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**the Roast says:**

Seems like an HBO kind of fight. They love Sergio. Pirog is on the radar. That KO of Jacobs alone will buy him another shot.

**mauryj says:**

1)Dibella is right there in the mix w/ Arum and King because he speaks out of both sides of his mouth..ask all the boxers he dumped over the last five years.

2)Dibella is NOT the owner of a minor league baseball franchise, but the face for a group of silent investors including an eyewear magnate and real estate brothers.

the 2009 film, "Love Ranch," which starred Helen Mirren and Joe Pesci and received a theatrical release, actually came out in 2010 for one week--it cost \$25 million and grossed \$140,000.....

Mr. Woods i believe you should check out your facts before u become another Dibella enabler---

WHAT IS IGNORED IS THAT HE PROMOTES MANFREDO ALSO--- so dibella will get paid twice for a sham of a fight.

Haymon calls the shots on Berto as he did on Jermain Taylor---

i expected more from tss than this "kinder" side interview that skewers the facts....i wonder why paulie went so quietly without a retort