

Written by Eric Raskin
Monday, 28 March 2011 14:55

I was in Atlantic City on Saturday night for the Boxing After Dark card headlined by Yuriorkis Gamboa's four-round destruction of Jorge Solis (it hasn't been a very good March for fighters named Solis) and, seated almost directly behind the HBO broadcast crew, I witnessed one of my least favorite forms of fan/journalist interaction:

While the commentators were still working, doing their postfight on-air standup at ringside, a couple of drunk fans were leaning over the metal guard rail, yelling friendly but obnoxiously loud greetings to Max Kellerman and Roy Jones. Look, most broadcasters and writers are happy to chat with the fans; just do them the courtesy of waiting until they're done working, especially if they're in the middle of a live telecast or rushing to file on deadline.

That said, there are plenty of appropriate forms of fan/journalist interaction, and Twitter has quickly become a favorite of mine. So for this week's miniature mailbag, we're going with a pair of tweets from reader Joel Stern, sent in response to my article last week about Bob Arum's continued stalling of the Gamboa-Juan Manuel Lopez showdown:

@EricRaskin Put Lopez-Gamboa together now. If there is fireworks, you have trilogy. Barrera-Morales started out on BAD and ended up on PPV
Not sure where this magical groundswell of public desire for Lopez-Gamboa is going to spring from beside the hardcore.
@efronb

Joel,

In 280 characters or less, you made a couple of good points. Barrera-Morales is an excellent example, and even though they never made it to pay-per-view, the Israel Vazquez-Rafael Marquez series was another fine illustration of how smaller, not-quite-superstar fighters can make substantial money by producing multiple classic fights. Sure, either Gamboa or Lopez might blow the other out, a la Nonito Donaire vs. Fernando Montiel, and you won't get a rematch or a rubber match. But sometimes you have to take risks—if the fighters are willing to take those risks, Arum can take one too.

And you're right: Neither Gamboa nor Lopez really have much chance of crossing over beyond the hardcore fan by continuing to pile up wins over B-level opposition. In Arum's defense, there's a little something to be said for simply building up name recognition. If a fighter has been around long enough, if he's fought on HBO a half-dozen times, his name starts to resonate a little. Neither Gamboa or Lopez are going to become household names anytime soon (sadly, that often happens after boxers start to decline). But it's possible that with each fight, a few more casual fans will develop awareness and the potential PPV numbers will grow ever so slightly.

Still, it sure seems the best possible intersection of hardcore interest and mainstream interest is

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arriving this year. Having the two fighters in the ring together for postfight interviews on Saturday night was an obvious and correct move. Now you schedule Gamboa-Lopez for July or maybe you let them share a card one last time in July to set up a PPV in October or November.

Either way, to use Arum's analogy, I think the cake needs to come out of the oven in 2011. You want the fans to be fed ... before they get fed up.

And with that, I now feed you your weekly helping of Rants:

- The word "practice" will forever belong to Allen Iverson, and now Roger Mayweather has similar ownership of the word "angles." That was the highlight of Uncle Roger's interview that made its way around the web last week, getting the close nod over his calling Manny Pacquiao a "clubfighter." (Frankly, I agree with Roger; Pacquiao IS a clubfighter. It's just a really, really big club, approximately the size of the entire earth, and Pacquiao's the best fighter in that club.)
- I've been plowing through the brilliant AMC show Breaking Bad lately, and one of the central themes, particularly in the third season, concerns how our bad decisions tend to have negative effects far beyond anything we ever considered. In that vein, I'm going to go ahead and blame the hiring department at Epix for Nate Campbell's comeback. Had they made the best possible decision to hire Campbell as their expert analyst instead of the worst possible decision to hire Lennox Lewis, maybe Campbell wouldn't be making the dubious choice to fight on.
- If AMC has the best batting average of any network on television, FX is a close second—but no matter how highly a network's executives value quality programming, ratings still matter. Lights Out wasn't a great show, but it was at least a very good one, and it's a shame that the positive critical response never translated into adequate public interest. Oh well. Patrick "Lights" Leary might be gone from our lives after the April 5 season finale that is now a series finale, but I have a feeling we'll be seeing more of the man who brought Lights Leary to life, Holt McCallany.
- I had an excellent seat in Atlantic City on Saturday (I was there covering the fights on deadline for HBO.com, which landed me one row closer than usual), but I still had to suffer through watching no-names like Roy Jones, Julio Cesar Chavez, and Marco Antonio Barrera enjoy superior press seating. What have any of those clowns ever done? There's no justice in the journalism world.
- Speaking of Chavez, I finally figured out where I've seen his current nose before: <http://tinyurl.com/4hgun2w>
(And I'm not referring to Linda Hamilton.)
- Tommy Zbikowski's professional record now stands at 3-0, after Bob Arum's new Butterbean just barely avoided a Mitchell Rose-ing at the hands of Caleb Grummet. My prediction: Tommy Z's record remains 3-0 for a long, long time.
- While the Gamboa-Solis fight was an entertaining little beatdown and the Mikey Garcia-Matt Remillard bout was a reasonable enough affair, by far the best action on the Boardwalk Hall

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show came in the untelevised fight between unbeaten junior feathers Teon Kennedy and Jorge Diaz. Kennedy showed a lot of poise and skill, Diaz a lot of heart, but there are three people worth criticizing here: Judge Alan Rubinstein, who didn't give Diaz a single round after the second and somehow scored this close fight 118-109; judge John Poturaj, whose 117-109 card was only minimally more palatable; and whoever it was at ESPN who supposedly turned down this fight. If one of these guys had been Cuban, you'd better believe Friday Night Fights would have snatched it up in a minute.

- Speaking of FNF and the Cubans, sure, he had a made-to-order opponent in front of him, but I'm putting Yudel Jhonson second (behind Gamboa) on my pro-potential list, ahead of Guillermo Rigondeaux. As for the stoppage in Jhonson's fight with Richard Gutierrez, it was premature, but I don't really mind in a fight in which one guy has won every single round and the other has shown no signs that he's capable of winning.

- At the risk of ripping off Chris Berman's unbearable shtick, how would everyone feel about trying to make the nickname Yunier "Cool Ranch" Dorticos stick?

- ESPN's Brian Kenny commented on Friday night that it was uncharacteristic of the sportsmanlike Vitali Klitschko to yell at Odlanier Solis when their fight reached a premature conclusion. But do you remember how Vitali got in the face of Corrie Sanders after Sanders blitzed his brother? Vitali is generally very sportsmanlike, but he also has a surly side and his aggressive reaction to Solis being unable to continue was not really out of character.

- As long as I'm disagreeing with ESPN analysts on Klitschko-Solis commentary, I think Teddy Atlas was way off in claiming Solis' approach was all wrong and that he needed to be more aggressive to beat Vitali. For two minutes and 45 seconds, Solis was boxing and countering nicely and was giving Vitali his most difficult round since he unretired. Against Wladimir, I agree, balls-out aggression is the way to go. Against Vitali, if you're slick enough, your best shot is to move, counterpunch, take advantage of his stiffness, and maybe get him frustrated and making mistakes. Everyone remembers the Vitali-Chris Byrd fight for the quit job, but Byrd also was giving Klitschko some problems with his speed and boxing ability, and that may have played a small role in his decision to throw in the towel.

- I hate to say it because I enjoy his fights so much, but Antonio Escalante = Augie Sanchez 2.0.

- I'm tired of ending my Rants columns with shameless plugs for my podcast, Ring Theory (<http://ringtheory.podbean.com>

). So just know that the following plug comes absolutely loaded with shame. Last week's episode, with guest Max Kellerman, was one of our best yet, and Max's take on the Top Rank-Golden Boy feud is a must-listen. Also, if you don't subscribe to the show, you'll never know which boxer's fighting future merits comparisons to a dissected frog, whose last name is properly pronounced "Bluhbluhbluh," or what the "big brother whammy" is all about. And if you lack that knowledge, you're going to be at a huge disadvantage when the Ring Theory Trivia iPhone app drops.

RASKIN'S RANTS: BAD In A.C. With MAB & JCC (Plus FNF, FX, AMC, etc.)

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brownsugar says:

Wow,..this guy Raskin is right on the money this Monday... I've been trying to find a clip of the Teon Kennedy Diaz fight... I'm hearing all kinds of buzz that it was one amazing show of blood, guts, courage and skill.. yet hardly nobody is covering it...it never even made it on youtube?????... Also I thought the usually observant Teddy Atlas must have read about Solis rather than actually watched it because his commentary was so far off... either that or he thinks every heavyweight should fight like MikeTyson. No wonder he keeps holding back his Russian Heavy Povetkin... it'll take a long time to make that happen.... and it's really not necessary...Tysons' style of fighting would backfire if he didn't get quick KO's because he was using so much energy with all the darting bobbing and weaving and powerpunching..... Solis's approach was that of a well schooled experienced boxer, he was avoiding the brute, blunt force of a larger man who can also fight... while picking the correct spots to execute.. Teddy made it seem like the guy was a complete cowardly bum...Solis was terrific untill he blew his knees out....but another Cuban,... Lara was a huge dissappointment last Friday on FNF... I think some of these Cuban guys don't take their opponents seriously enough. The guy he fought had nowhere near the amateur experience of Lara and had been inactive for almost 2 years... you should have seen the disgusted look on Ronnie Shields face when it was announced the fight was a draw.. and finally Yudel does show alot more fire than Rigondeaux,.. but Rigondeaux looked like Aaron prior in his last fight... well maybe not exactly like Pryor,.. but he tapped into raw-aggression mode to get the quick win by way of some vicious body punching... Good Rant!!!!