

The Mayweather-Ortiz Six-Pack Of Signing Subplots...RASKIN

Written by Eric Raskin
Sunday, 12 June 2011 21:31



After Manny Pacquiao and Juan Manuel Marquez finalized details for their third fight a few weeks back, I authored a column entitled “A Six-Pac Of Signing Subplots.” Sadly, in the case of Floyd Mayweather vs. Victor Ortiz, that oh-so-clever “Pac” pun is not in play. But I still like the “six subplots” concept, so I’m tacking on a “k” and bravely forging ahead.

Mayweather fancies himself a hip-hop-industry mogul and Ortiz enjoys spitting the occasional rhyme. So what could be more appropriate than connecting our six subplots with a rap music theme? Specifically, since Mayweather and 50 Cent have matching “BFF” bracelets, I’m assigning each subplot a 50 Cent song title that applies. (For the record, I know almost nothing about rap music and could only name one 50 Cent song on my own. But I found a list online of

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all the songs in his catalogue and made it work.)

So, here are six mini-angles worth exploring now that Mayweather-Ortiz is signed, set to the sweet, soothing sounds of one Curtis James Jackson III:

1. "Hustler's Ambition"

Mayweather doesn't fight often. But there's some quality-over-quantity starting to kick in here. Floyd has stood accused for many years of ducking top opposition, and it may well be that he's ducking Pacquiao, but this now marks the second consecutive fight in which Mayweather took on the highest-rated, most worthy welterweight not named Pacquiao.

It's easy to look back now and say that Shane Mosley was washed up coming into his fight with Mayweather 13 months ago, but at the time, Mosley was coming off a spectacular knockout win over Antonio Margarito and was generally considered a very live underdog against Mayweather. Ortiz is coming off a spectacular win of his own, over previously unbeaten Andre Berto, and is ranked number two at welterweight by The Ring, below only Pacquiao.

Opinions will vary on whether this is a dangerous fight for Mayweather. But it's at least a meaningful fight. If he's going to face a welterweight contender who isn't Manny Pacquiao, this is, without question, the best he could have done.

2. "I'll Still Kill"

The counter-claim against any praise for Mayweather seemingly choosing to face a threatening opponent is this: Mayweather only fights guys he's supremely confident he'll defeat, so he must see something in Ortiz that makes him certain of the outcome. We'd say that Mayweather sees something in Ortiz that we don't ... except we all see it also. We know Ortiz has major flaws. Some people think Ortiz has a chance to win despite those flaws; Mayweather obviously doesn't feel that way.

Here's what Ortiz has going for him: He's young (24), strong, can punch hard, has solid skills, and is a southpaw. Here's what he has working against him: He's an average-at-best defensive fighter, his chin is suspect, and his heart is still a little bit suspect (though the Berto fight erased about 90 percent of our doubts there).

In the end, he's a good fighter fresh off a major win—a win that might have caused the boxing world to overrate him slightly because of the "you're only as good as your last fight" thing. It was, after all, Ortiz's only win to date over a true title contender. Mayweather knows Ortiz's stock is (perhaps artificially) high and this is the perfect time to score a win over him and get real credit for it. Assuredly, Mayweather is confident he'll score that win. The fight wouldn't be happening otherwise.

3. "Follow Me Gangster"

The signing of this fight was announced directly by Mayweather on Twitter, with these words on

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the morning of June 7: “My fans have been waiting long enough. Floyd Mayweather vs Victor Ortiz. Sept-17 2011 for the WBC World Championship.”

This is the direction in which things have been heading for quite a while now, with athletes cutting out the middle men (reporters) and using social media to get their message out there. So nothing new there. Still, this has to qualify as the most significant news announcement made by a boxer via Twitter. If you check my Twitter account, you’ll find that I don’t follow any fighters. No offense to any of them, but I have yet to stumble across a boxer whose tweets are more often interesting than annoying. For the most part, I follow people on Twitter either because their tweets are legitimately thought-provoking and/or funny, because they’re fellow writers whose work I enjoy and it’s easiest to keep up with their latest articles by clicking on tweeted links, or because they break news a lot and it’s helpful to me to receive that news. The point of all this is, if boxers are all going to personally start breaking important news using their Twitter accounts, I might have to start following some boxers.

But here’s the more interesting sub-angle: How did nobody in the media catch any wind of Mayweather-Ortiz before Floyd announced it? We have all these writers constantly reporting on every little rumor floating around, and this deal got done without any of them knowing? That’s shocking to me. It almost never happens anymore. It’s reminiscent of when it was announced that the Phillies landed Cliff Lee this past offseason. Every report had him going to the Yankees or staying with the Rangers ... until suddenly he was doing neither.

It isn’t easy to get a major deal done in secretive silence anymore, but good for Golden Boy for pulling it off, and I have to say, it was kind of cool finding out about it directly from Mayweather. (Well, via a retweet, anyway, from someone I actually follow.)

4. “Straight To The Bank”

No, that 50 Cent song title isn’t a reference to the payday Mayweather will make—that’ll go straight to either the IRS or the betting window, not the bank. I’m instead referring to the coin this fight will generate for Golden Boy Promotions and HBO.

I don’t mean to imply that either company is in financial peril. I’m just saying that neither has had its fingers in a major pay-per-view event yet this year, and it’s those major events that create the profit that allow for other events that aren’t so profitable. At this moment, Mayweather is the biggest one-night cash cow either company has at its disposal. It’s not that GBP or HBO couldn’t have survived additional inactivity from Mayweather. But, you know, activity is preferable to inactivity.

Mayweather vs. Ortiz figures to generate somewhere between 750,000-1,000,000 PPV buys. Both Golden Boy and HBO will be thrilled to total up those numbers in September, rather than building a much smaller PPV show on that date around Saul “Canelo” Alvarez.

Speaking of which ...

5. “Build You Up”

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There's talk of making the Mayweather-Ortiz PPV a split-site show paired with a Canelo fight at the Staples Center. Whether they pursue the split-site undertaking or keep it simple and make Alvarez the semifinal in the same arena, featuring the popular young Mexican in this way would be a smart move that could help a little bit in the short term (boosting PPV sales) and a lot in the long term.

Obviously, there will be a hefty helping of advertising for Mayweather vs. Ortiz. If Alvarez's face is on the billboards, if his name is in the radio ads, if he's treated almost like a third headliner, that goes a long way toward elevating him into the mainstream consciousness. If Golden Boy has a serious eye on the future, they will use a superstar like Mayweather to build up a star like Alvarez in this way.

6. "Patiently Waiting"

You didn't think I could write about a Mayweather fight without branching off into a discussion of Mayweather vs. Pacquiao, did you? Here's the simple question already bubbling about in the boxing community: Does Mayweather-Ortiz mean we should get our hopes up at all for Pacquiao-Mayweather?

Two reasons to say yes: (1) We now know Mayweather isn't retired from boxing; (2) Ortiz is a southpaw, making him a logical "tune-up" for a fight with Pacquiao.

But let's keep our emotions in check. Other than those two considerations, nothing has changed. Mayweather still hasn't given any indication that he wants to fight Pacquiao. There's still the matter of Pacquiao suing Mayweather. There are still Floyd's various legal problems (which could, theoretically, even screw up the Ortiz fight).

Yes, a 2012 Pacquiao-Mayweather fight—an event for which the din of some 3,000,000 remote controls clicking "PURCHASE" will drown out all the "boxing is dead" blather for a little while—feels more realistic now than it did last week. But there's a looooong way to go before you should starting blocking out all your Saturday nights for next spring. A lot of different things have to happen first.

The first of them is Mayweather coming back after a 16-month layoff and defeating a credible young opponent.

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