

Written by Eric Raskin

Monday, 01 August 2011 09:13



Vazquez-Arce does seem like a fine scrap on paper. TSS-EM thinks Rafael is a step closer to the end of the line than is Arce. What say you, TSS Universe? (Hogan)

As a lifelong Philly sports fan, I suppose I have to open this week's column by commenting on the almost embarrassing bounties reaped by my football and baseball franchises this weekend. I wouldn't be surprised if the Eagles, behind a dog-killing ex-con quarterback and more blockbuster free agent signings than the rest of the NFL combined, become one of the top four teams America loves to hate this year (joining the Cowboys, Patriots, and Steelers). But if they finally win a Super Bowl, that's fine by me. Meanwhile, the Phillies managed to add another All-Star bat on Friday without giving up a single major leaguer and then swept the Pirates (not even requiring any help from the umps, it should be noted). According to one website I just checked (in other words, I did research, but only the bare minimum), the Phils currently have the shortest odds to win the World Series (+230, just ahead of the Red Sox at +240).

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On the one hand, I'm thrilled to see my teams spending money that is not mine and possibly swindling other GMs. On the other hand, with the Eagles in particular, there will be so many new faces that I can't deny I'm really just "rooting for laundry," to borrow the famous Jerry Seinfeld line. So be it. As long as some guy wearing my preferred laundry hoists the Lombardi Trophy, all other details are incidental.

Unless you're from Philly, you've probably tuned out by now, so let's move along to boxing, the sport where we all have the same rooting interest: We just want to see a good fight. This week's reader email suggests one that definitely qualifies as such.

Hi Eric,

I have an interesting matchup in mind. It seems Rafael Marquez's next fight may be against top 122-pounder Toshiaki Nishioka, but since many people are of the opinion that the fight may not be so competitive, how about scrapping the idea in favor of this one: Rafael Marquez versus Jorge Arce. What's not to love about this matchup!? Two popular Mexican warriors who make for exciting fights; both faded enough that they'll both get hit plenty but neither so faded that fans would feel guilty about enjoying it; and there would even be a meaningless alphabet belt on the line, if either guy cares about that kind of thing. And there's already the perfect slot for this fight—the undercard to Pacquiao-Marquez III! Both Marquez bros on the same card is never a bad thing and the appearance of Arce might entice casual fans who shelled out for the Pacquiao-Mosley snoozefest and remember how much fun his fight with Wilfredo Vazquez Jr. was. It might even persuade those boxing fans who view Pacquiao-Marquez as a mismatch.

What do you think?

—Joe T.

Joe,

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I think you're making entirely too much sense for your idea to ever become a reality. This is boxing, after all, the sport that puts a 5,000-ticket fight in a 90,000-seat stadium outside Detroit, the sport that is allowing Antonio Margarito to make more money after getting caught loading his gloves than he could when we thought he was legit, the sport that couldn't give us Bernard Hopkins-Roy Jones II between 1997 and 2004 but did give it to us in 2010. So let's not discuss your idea in any realistic terms involving when and where. There's little room in the boxing business for logic. Marquez-Nishioka is happening, which means Marquez-Arce won't be happening on the November 12 pay-per-view undercard, no matter how perfect it would be in that slot. So let's discuss your idea purely as a fantasy fight, because that's all it is for now.

No question, Marquez vs. Arce is a sensational matchup, and I have to give you credit, Joe, because I haven't seen it mentioned anywhere else. Both fighters are indeed faded to perfection, which is to say that both are still viable competitors but neither has the option of relying on razor-sharp reflexes and outboxing the other guy. Marquez-Arce can only be a bloody, brutal brawl. So many of the greatest fights in boxing history have come when both guys are either at the tail end of their primes or just beyond that, in the early stages of decline. Think the Gatti-Ward trilogy, Ali-Frazier III, Corrales-Castillo, and even the Vazquez-Marquez fights. Nobody in any of those fights was "shot" (except maybe Ward by the third Gatti fight and Vazquez in the fourth Marquez fight). But nobody was at their absolute physical peak either. That's what we have with Arce and Marquez: faded but not shot, skilled but easy to hit, able to turn a fight with one punch, and willing to dig deep to win. Plus they're both huge names for 122-pounders. As you wrote, what's not to love?

Okay, enough living in a dream world, here are this week's Rants on real fights and real news from around the boxing scene:

- Fights are not won and lost during Face Off With Max Kellerman. But if they were, mark down Floyd Mayweather for a guaranteed manhandling of Victor Ortiz. Mayweather was well spoken and made strikingly intelligent points, while Ortiz didn't know what approach he wanted to take, his inexperience on the grand stage showed, and nothing he said really felt pure and honest. But, again, fights are not won and lost during Face Off. (Though I should note that Bernard Hopkins out-talked Jean Pascal and then outfought him, and Wladimir Klitschko narrowly outpointed David Haye on the set before comprehensively outpointing him in the ring.)

- I'm as big a Pawel Wolak fan as anybody. But I have to point out: His media blitz that has included the signing of a new managerial contract, talk of an alphabet title shot, etc., is doing a fine job of masking the reality that he's coming off a fortunate draw in a fight nearly every observer expected him to win.

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- If there's a good fight going on, the fans are enjoying it, both boxers are producing viable offense, and one boxer ends up getting disqualified for punches that weren't malicious in intent or damaging in effect, well, that's just weak refereeing. Yes, Vic Drakulich, I'm talking to you. You sodomized the pooch in the Yordanis Despaigne-Edison Miranda fight. But don't take my criticism personally, Vic. Refereeing is a hard job. Not everyone has the right mental makeup for it. There's no shame in admitting you're among those who don't.
- Just when you thought Drakulich's night couldn't get any worse, Kenny Bayless came out and worked the next two fights on the ESPN2 broadcast. Not a flattering point of comparison for my man Vic.
- As for the main event that Bayless officiated on Friday Night Fights, you have to give Lamont Peterson serious points for closing the show. You just never know what the judges might say if you let them get the last word.
- Regarding the staredown between Despaigne and Miranda at the weigh-in: Why do we still have to blurcle the middle finger? It's 2011. I feel like Stone Cold Steve Austin has lost and the terrorists have won.
- Great news, everybody: Nonito Donaire, one of the five most talented fighters on the planet, is coming back in October, after only a nine-month layoff following a career-best HBO-televvised win in which he sustained no damage at all! (Remember what I wrote earlier about logic rarely prevailing in boxing?)
- Just have to say, I agree wholeheartedly with The Ring's decision to move Amir Khan ahead of Tim Bradley in the junior welterweight rankings. Their 140-pound resumes are comparable, but recent achievement has to warrant additional weight. In the last two years, Khan is 6-0 at junior welter, with three wins I'd call highly meaningful. In that same time span, Bradley has only fought three times in the division (and had to settle for a no-contest in one of those bouts). It's a close call, but activity is the difference maker here.
- Guess what happened last week? Some sanctioning body stripped some guy of his belt for no

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reason and now two undeserving guys will fight for the vacant belt. And that's all I'll say about that, because if fans, journalists, broadcast networks, and everyone else would just stop citing these for-profit organizations' rankings or telling us who their beltholders are—in either positive or negative terms—maybe someday a generation of fighters will come up that isn't interested in paying for their belts.

- Actually, that “someday” might have started this past weekend. Thank you, Mike Alvarado, for breaking free of the sheep mentality. I'm starting a “303! 303!” chant in my living room right now.

- In fact, just for being so unusually awesome, Mr. Alvarado, I'm going to do something I never do for anyone: give you props for having a tattoo with a cool-looking design. (On the other end of the tat spectrum, may I present junior featherweight Shawn Nichol and the pair of red lips inked into the side of his neck?)

- Did everyone get a look at Kevin McBride's love handles and jiggling gut in his knockout loss to Marius Wach? Jeez, I've seen guys on press row with better physiques than that. Hey, Kevin, James Toney called; he wants his workout tapes back.

- I received a press release last week that began with the words “Boxing Sensation Hector Camacho Jr.” I have no idea what the next word was.

- Check out a new episode of Ring Theory (<http://ringtheory.podbean.com>) this week (probably Wednesday), featuring a guest appearance from the always insightful Ring Editor-in-Chief Nigel Collins. We'll talk Khan vs. Judah, Tarver vs. Green, Mares vs. Agbeko, and of course, with the “Quick Picks” competition suddenly heating up, Raskin vs. Dettloff.

Eric Raskin can be contacted at RaskinBoxing@yahoo.com. You can follow him on Twitter @EricRaskin and listen to new episodes of his podcast, Ring Theory, at <http://ringtheory.podbean.com>.

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brownsugar says:

with all the experience the Cuban had... he should have upped the pace went buckwild on Miranda,... especially when he did his Greg Page imitation of moving his head to nullify the Cubans multi fisted assault... the rematch is in the works.. great night for ESPN FNF.. hope I can make to the Cosmo someday... beautiful hotel.... good article