Written by Zach Levin, SPECIAL TO TSS
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Here are the heavy hitters set to open up boxing at the Barclays. (Hogan Photos)

Steve Farhood is a ubiquitous figure in the New York boxing scene. From an insignificant club show in the Bronx to a major event at The Garden, he's certain to be there observing from ringside. Most often he's wearing a headset and commentating, or taking notes for a future article. On the rare night he's not working, he's still working—his brain didn't come with an off

switch. The former "Ring" editor knows too much not to be perpetually observing, cataloging, ruminating, and, lucky for us, sharing it rather well over the airwaves or in print. No surprise, then, that he sprinkled our conversation with various tidbits that were news to me; that John L. Sullivan had fought in Brooklyn or the last world championship fight in the borough was in 1931. "That's a long time ago. Anything that happened in boxing before I got started was a long time ago," joked the 55-year-old, who became a member of the boxing media around 1980.

Along with his ShoBox co-host Barry Tompkins, Steve will be doing ShoExtreme's coverage (7PM ET/PT), which will precede the Showtime Championship Boxing tripleheader. 25-year-old Brownsville-bred middleweight Danny Jacobs will be the featured attraction that Steve will be covering (with highlights of Bronx junior middleweight prospect Eddie Gomez possibly included). One of the most ballyhooed prospect/contenders to come out of these parts in years, Jacobs hasn't been in the ring in over 19 months because he has been facing more lethal opposition outside of it: cancer. A large malignant tumor had wrapped itself around his spinal cord and eventually left him paralyzed. When it was removed, 25 radiation treatments followed. And yet he made it back and will be slinging leather Saturday….

SF: **I think this is going to be an extremely difficult moment for Danny. I won't say extremely difficult fight because, predictably, he's in with someone he should be able to beat. [Josh Luteran, 13-1 (9 KOs)] But the emotion is going to be so tremendous for him that he's gonna have to keep that in check. I've already read a quote of his where he said he was worried he was going to cry. And I would cry! Heck, I mean this guy beat cancer and his first fight back is going to be in Brooklyn!? In the biggest card this borough—his home borough—has had in 10 years since that KeySpan Park fight. I just think there's a lot of emotional pressure on him.**

ZL: He was paralyzed, confined to a wheelchair. He was on death's door.

SF: **This is one of the most remarkable boxing stories you'll ever see. And I'm just glad that we're going to show Danny on this card. Obviously, because he has been off for a long time, you can't expect him to be in a super competitive fight. That would be ridiculous. Yet we are putting him on Extreme and there will be a feature run on him. I just can't imagine what the emotion is going to be like when he comes out. We've all felt emotion in big fights, whatever that emotion is, but this is kind of a unique story. And Danny Jacobs is a winner the minute he climbs through those reports. I mean, he's already a winner. He was told by doctors that he would never fight again. Fortunately, he didn't listen to them. And…I don't really care how far Danny Jacobs goes as a fighter. The fact he's gone this far is just remarkable. It'd a great human interest story.**

ZL: Let's talk about the main event, Danny Garcia vs. Erik Morales. In November 2006, Morales got blasted in three rounds by Pacquiao. This incredible warrior sat on the canvas and let himself be counted out. He appeared done in every sense. Yet six years later he's headlining this historic card on Showtime. Pretty crazy, huh?

SF: **Erik Morales is such a warrior that even with the result of the first Garcia fight [On 3/24/12 Garcia won a wide UD 12], even with that classic formula of young up-and-comer meeting the future hall of famer, there was enough call for a rematch. He didn't do it convincingly enough to eliminate at least some call for a rematch. And that's totally to Erik Morales' credit. I mean, the guy is just gonna keep fighting. Now did Garcia beat him? Yes. Did Garcia beat him fairly clearly? Yes. He went down late in the fight and it sealed the deal. But, it's not in my mind as one-sided as a lot of the passing-of-the-torch type fights.**

ZL: What astonishes me about Morales is I think he's kind of a shot fighter—physically. Yet he is transcending the physical somehow. That Maidana fight shocked me. His legs looked stiff and old. His body looked soft. He looks downright decrepit. But he can hang with these guys.

SF: **Well, he is remarkable. His career is remarkable. Here's a guy whose prime was at 122. We're now 18 pounds higher. But the one thing I'm going to look for in the Garcia fight…the one thing more than any other when I think of Erik Morales: he always was the last guy to punch in an exchange. And he wasn't any defensive wiz in his prime—he got hit plenty. But anytime you hit him, he always answered. IF you hurt him, he answered. Barrera punched him, he hit Barrera back. He always was the last to punch. In some of the exchanges with Danny Garcia, that wasn't the case. And that leads me to believe that Garcia will likely win again. Because that was to me what distinguished Morales. So is he shot? Well, I don't know if he's shot. He's obviously competitive. He beat [Pablo] Cano, who's a young kid. He managed to beat him to win that title, for what it's worth. That's what I'm gonna look for; does he punch last?**

ZL: Apropos of Age versus Youth, what are your thoughts on Randall Bailey-Devon Alexander?

SF: **It's a weird fight Randall Bailey-Devon Alexander because it's the type of fight where Alexander could dominate 2:59 of each round and still lose the fight. For my mind, Bailey**

is the hardest single punch hitter in all of boxing.

ZL: And at 38, another wildly well-preserved fighter.

SF: **Yeah, you know, Bailey's been down a bunch of times. He's lost a bunch of fights. He's obviously up there in years. But maybe it's just time that we reconsider fighter's ages. Because 38 isn't what 38 was when I started covering this stuff.**

ZL: Why is that, Steve?

SF: **I think the biggest reason for it—and as I'm looking at Bailey's record I'm trying to see if this justifies what I'm about to say. Randall Bailey has had 50 fights. Needless to say, a ton of them were first and second round knockouts. A 38-year-old fighter fifty years ago wouldn't have had 50 fights; he would've had 90 fights, he would've had 110 fights. I always use Antonio Tarver as the best example. Antonio is 44 now…and how many fights has he had? 35. Granted, he turned pro late. He was 27, 28 when he turned pro. But I think that's the reason why a Tarver at 44 could still be competitive with the division's best. That's why a Bailey at 38…. The number of fights and the amount of wear and tear isn't the way it used to be.**

ZL: Another unlikely survivor and Brooklynite will be on the televised portion of the card, Paul "The Magic Man" Malignaggi.

SF: **Remarkable career. Remarkable. Sunday night I just saw his fight with [Vyacheslav] Senchenko. For any fighter to go into Ukraine and win a world championship [WBA welterweight title] is absolutely remarkable.**

ZL: I thought he was a lamb to the slaughter. I wasn't giving him any chance before that fight.

SF**: I agree. Because what is that old saying about fighting on the road? You need a**

knockout to get a draw. The only trouble is Paulie doesn't knock anyone out. He has the lowest knockout percentage of any world champion in boxing. How is he going to beat the incumbent champion on the road? And yet he did it. He fought well, he fought smart. His toughness, certainly mental and physical, came into play. Anyone who saw the Cotto fight learned exactly how tough he was. Paulie's story is as good as anyone's. And I don't think he's fought in Brooklyn since his pro debut, that night in KeySpan park. That makes this an event and a full-circle story.

Comment on this article

deepwater says:

Farhood has some good insight. Farhood is also cool in my book because he would go to nursing homes in long beach ny and show the old timers some old time fights. anyone know if he still does that?

amayseng says:

showtime has the best commentators in the business....

by far

brownsugar says:

I've always taken Steve for granted,.. but I'm growing to appreciate his brilliance and importance more and more...

I personally don't like being in NY, NY,.. too crowded, too cold,.. too congested and a whole lot of other things in the "too much" category. I prefer to have my space and peace of mind down here in the "cornfields".
But I'm chomping at the bit to visit the Barclays center... I bet it'll be an awesome experience for those who are attending. Gonna have to keep up with future events.