Written by Kelsey McCarson
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I've had about a week to think about it, and I still don't get it. Women's boxing is more appealing to me than all the other women's sports that are getting televised, stuff like women's basketball or golf. I mean, it's *boxing*. You had me there, television…so why no women's boxing? Did those sports go through the same thing? I mean, should golf (men or women) even be televised

in the first place? Sigh.

I digress. In part one of this reflection , the wife told me women's boxing doesn't make it to television because the bigwig program directors simply don't know what they're doing. Flyweight champion Ava Knight echoed the very same sentiment. She told me no one will give her, or her talented cohort of contemporaries, a chance. Give us a chance, she says. A chance!

Still, I'm a fair-minded man. Two or three people saying the same thing doesn't make it fact, so I decided to reach out to a few more people I know about the situation. First up was Kaliesha West, one of the top women champions in the sport today.

What do you think about it, Kaliesha? Why can't women's boxing get on TV?

"I've heard so many different reasons and they all sound the same. They all sound like someone who doesn't know what they're talking about. They're just looking for an answer to shut-up whoever is asking the question. We need someone on top in boxing who knows what they're talking about to coordinate female matches on every single major undercard there is…and to make sure it's a female fighter who's on top of her stuff, who knows what she's doing. But they won't do that. They're just following the same thing that has been going on for years. And everyone is afraid to break it. No one has enough *juevos* to stand up, put it on and promote it."

So far, Kaliesha seems to be on the same page as my wife and Ava. Still, I say, what happened? Remember the glory days of women's boxing, Kaliesha? Laila Ali and Mia St. Jo—

"NO! What happened in those days was Mia St. John was on the cover of Playboy. Laila Ali is Laila Ali. All she had to do was say she wanted to be a tennis player and she'd been a famous tennis player, or a racquetball player and she'd been a famous racquetball player. Her name is what speaks. She had no amateur background, and she became a champion by fighting a lot ducks. Then you had Christy Martin, who was that diamond in the rough who had skill like the men. She'd go in there with girls who'd fight like it was a street fight or something, so yeah, she'd go in there and look spectacular, she looked great. She was a lot like female fighters who fight today, who fight great—*today*. But there has been no era of female boxing. There's never been an era of female's boxing!"

By now, I'm sort of afraid to ask anything more. West is practically screaming at me so I sheepishly ask what can change the sport for the better, mostly so I don't have to talk for very long.

"It's gonna take someone special. Someone who not only knows the science behind it, but someone who knows how to be a true champion in and out of the ring. It's gonna take someone who not only represents women's boxing, but also never lets it go unknown that the state of women's boxing is crap."

Maybe she's calmed down a bit, or maybe my bravery is now buoyed by the realization that I'm phone with her and not within her physical reach, but I ask her about Ali again. Hasn't she had that pedestal? Wouldn't she speak up if it were really that bad?

"Laila Ali is about Laila Ali. I mean, if it doesn't pertain to her, she isn't interested. If I was in her shoes and I had a girl to come up to me who was world champion and tell her the struggle, I would feel for her and try to help. I would fight for her and the dozens other like. Just like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Just like that female tennis player, Billy Jean King. That special type of person is not on that platform right now."

What West tells me isn't all doom and gloom, just most of it. She says she's excited for the new opportunities women are finding in the amateur game right now. She says it's something that has never really been afforded women in the past, and she had tremendous things to say about our United States gold medalist Claressa Shields.

"I love Claressa Shields. She's a real champion. She's been knocking people out all over!"

Still, West knows what Claressa knows : it's not just winning that matters. Despite being the first and possibly greatest female amateur boxer in the history of the United States, it isn't Shields who received the most attention, it was bronze medalist Marlen Esparza.

I tell West my wife and I were surprised about what happened after the Olympics, or rather what didn't happen. Claressa Shields was widely ignored. She wasn't offered even half the slew of endorsements Marlen received before the Olympics started, and she wasn't offered anything substantial enough by a boxing promoter to leave the amateur scene all together. What gives? Why didn't the first appearance of women's boxing in the Olympics really do anything for the sport?

"Honestly, I didn't expect anything. You know why? Because I knew the one who was getting the love and getting attention was not going to open her mouth for the rest of us."

What can be done, Kaliesha?

"There is nothing anyone can do unless they're that lucky favorite. Marlen is the lucky favorite. She's got entertainment and Hollywood behind her. It's so sad the way it is for Claressa. She's not getting endorsements the way she should be. But she's young enough to turn into another Anne Wolfe…but even ten times better! She knows a little of what it is like for the professionals now. She won a gold medal and it was empty at the top. We won world titles in other countries and it was empty at the top. Thank God she's young enough..."

Damn, Kaliesha. Damn.

Truth be told, Kaliesha is one of the most entertaining fighters I've ever talked to in the sport. She brings everything to the table. She's smart, genial and she knows how to stir things up. She's Muhammad Ali, Joe Louis and Emilia Earhart. She's fascinating to the point of proving all on her very own that the naysayers are wrong about women's boxing. I stumbled across a feature done on her in the UK for a sports magazine program called Trans World Sport. Basically, it took the producers about 13 minutes to put every single U.S. television outlet to shame. The dynamic between the fighter and her father/trainer, Juan West, is Shane and Jack Mosley times ten. The feature shows a fighter more interesting than a prime Oscar De La Hoya ever was, yet she continues to languish in relative obscurity because the programming decision-makers are refusing to look for anything other than the next male boxing star.

I finish up my foray into questioning the powers that be with a discussion with Kaliesha's father. Juan West was a boxing champion in the Navy and fought six fights as a professional before

deciding to become a trainer. He's helped bring along several notable amateur and professional fighters, including heavyweight Chris Arreola. Maybe he'll paint a more positive outlook on the situation women are facing.

"The world of boxing is full of hustlers and frauds. I've had fighters who began training ten years after Kaliesha and they were televised first. They didn't have the style, the charisma or the skillset she has. They were just male."

Nope. Juan paints as bleak a picture as ever. He wants to get Kaliesha on television but opportunities to do so are few and far between. It's almost impossible, he tells me.

"It's a monopoly for men. Women just have to fall into a slot. They have to be on standby and be lucky and end up on television by coincidence. As far as on purpose? It's been impossible. Kaliesha has been televised about six or seven times now, always in other countries. Never in the United States. It's a shame."

But why is this happening?

"Lately, the promoters have just been pretty much chauvinistic thinking the women in the world aren't worthy of being on television. I know that if anyone would have watched Claressa Shields in there winning her gold medal, they'd have seen a fighter just as good as Mike Tyson in there at destroying women bigger than her. That right there should've been the grand opening but it didn't open any doors for women. People aren't' going to view what they don't know anything about, so they're going to have take those fighters like Kaliesha, Claressa Shields and Ava Knight, the ones that are extraordinary, and follow their careers."

Juan tells me he and Kaliesha are happy to talk to me. He says the two can be as open and honest about the situation as anyone because they have absolutely nothing to lose. Let that sink in for a second. She's one of the more recognizable women in the sport, the bantamweight champion, and she's got nothing to lose.

Nothing.

At the end of things, I believe I am convinced. Something has to give for the women to be successful, and that something has to be us. We need to support them, and where television networks or promoters or advertisers are refusing to do so, we should demand it. It's something that has to be done. Women deserve just as fair a shake as men do in the sport. And let's face it, the standard of fairness in our beloved boxing is already set so low, it can't be too difficult to achieve.

My dear friends, I can't tell you how often my eyes have been subjected to a bout between two men who didn't deserve to be fighting on television. There simply has to be room, then, for a few women who do.

Comment on this article

leon30001 says:

Have you considered the possibility that, rightly or wrongly, no-one gives a damn? Just a thought!

Radam G says:

It is easy to get. Television sports are geared toward men -- out-of-shape ones who were never good in any combat sport. And these d¡cks are threatened by female boxing. Because the machoism in these Yanks cannot tolerate seeing that boxing dames, damsels and dolls can straight-up beat up big -@$$ belly men eyeballing those television screens.

And when that 3ds of whup-@$$er are good looking and straight-up superfine like K "Wild, Wild" West, the audience of boxing fans -- largely big-belly men with fantasies of if they would've been boxers they coulda and woulda done this and won that -- are turned off and will not watch. C'mon! Running the show of who will be televised are the good old-boys'-club d¡¢ks. And out, they are aiming to keep out the chicks. Holla!

deepwater says:

Instead of asking silly questions look to Irish sensation Katie Taylor . Her whole country is behind her and would pay their last nickle to watch her fight. I wonder why? You should be able to figure it out . Give the people a reason to spend their hard earned money and they will.

Bernie Campbell says:

What are you Radam a friggun revisionist? I dont want this frivolous amusement cutting into my

eliminators! Keep the women the fch out of boxing! What evil arse gay marriage advocate sanctioned this bloody article! I want my eliminators!

Radam G says:

B-camp! Heheheheheheheh! That is me in a nutshell. You are a hard dude. Give da gals some luv. Where is da luv! Hahaha!

Spinach Chin says:

What happened to Women's boxing on TV? Same thing that happened to WNBA games on TV...nobody wants to see it. Babes are subject to the same rules of supply and demand as the rest of athletes.

deepwater says:

Roller derby making a comeback . These girls learn to skate and then knock every member of the other team out.instant champions and riches and fame.

deepwater says:

Christy Martin became popular next to butter bean on the undercard of some good fights. Martin had a gimmick ,pink shorts cole miner daughter ,and a straight ahead seek and destroy style. It was entertaining . Butter bean was four hundred lbs and tried to kill the other guy for four rounds. Who doesn't want to see that.it was entertaining . Martin had a story people can get behind. Butter bean was fun to watch. These girls have to find their story . Something has to get people behind them. It can be a style of boxing or a story but something has to click. Golden boy should show 1 girl fight on each card and see what develops .it shouldn't take more then a year of ad campaigns and social networking to see results.

Bernie Campbell says:

When you put the womans sh.. on you take the mens sh.. off, I have too much of an investment hardcore to give up my eliminators! Give the women a lifetime channel again! They dont watch boxing anyway, It caters to the sick MF voyeristic men that get a kick out of it! Be real!