

Kirkland and Wolfe Reunited..And It Feels So Good..So Far

Written by Bernard Fernandez
Friday, 06 December 2013 00:00



ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. – Theirs is an on-again, off-again kind of thing, sort of like Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, with as much bickering but with a substantially higher violence quotient.

Two of the baddest-ass figures in boxing, oft-incarcerated super welterweight contender James “The Mandingo Warrior” Kirkland and his female trainer, Ann “Brown Sugar” Wolfe, have rejoined forces for another dual assault on Kirkland’s opponents and the public sensibilities, and this time each swears it’s for keeps.

Then again ...

“He left me. I didn’t leave him,” Wolfe said of the professional separations that were sometimes prompted by conscious decisions made by Kirkland and sometimes by the legal system that put her troubled fighter down and out more often and emphatically than the guy in the other corner ever could. “I never went nowhere. But now he’s back and we’re good. So far, anyway.”

The 29-year-old Kirkland (31-1, 27 KOs), who takes on Glen “Jersey Boy” Tapia (20-0, 12 KOs) in one of three HBO-televvised bouts here Saturday night in the Adrian Phillips Ballroom at Boardwalk Hall—Guillermo Rigondeaux (12-0, 8 KOs) defends his WBA and WBO super bantamweight championships against Joseph Agbeko (29-4, 22 KOs) and middleweights Lamar Russ (14-0, 7KOs) and Matthew Macklin (29-5, 20 KOs) square off in the others – also insists that he and Wolfe are finally together for the long haul, God and assorted police departments willing.

“Yes. Yes. Yes,” Kirkland responded when asked if his frequently contentious relationship with Wolfe has been permanently repaired to the satisfaction of both. “In boxing, we don’t always make the right decisions. A lot of times things are said that can’t easily be taken back. I think it was like that with me and Ann sometimes.

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“I’ve been in boxing practically my whole life, but at some point you have to ask yourself, ‘Who is it that can push and motivate you like no one else can?’ Some trainers can take you only to a certain level because that’s all they know. But me and Ann ... we know each other so well. When Ann tells me to do this or do that, I just do it, no matter how hard it is.

“Most fighters who train under her wind up quitting because they can’t handle the demands she makes of them. I didn’t always handle it as well as I might have. But I’m used to it now, I’ve been doing it for so long.”

Well, Kirkland did it, sometimes grudgingly, when he wasn’t incarcerated. He is no stranger to penal institutions, having had his once-promising career sidetracked by an armed-robbery conviction in 2003 and for illegal possession of a firearm in 2009. When he was released in September 2010, he exercised his prerogative to go in a different direction, as he had done in the past, to work with a trainer other than Wolfe. Bob Santos was Kirkland’s chief second *du jour*

and might have been in his corner for the Tapia fight, but a scheduling conflict – Santos is training Erislandy Lara for a Showtime-televised fight the same night against former WBA super welterweight titlist Austin Trout at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn, N.Y. – again steered the southpaw slugger to Wolfe’s Navy Seals-intensive gym and training regimen in Austin, Texas.

“Every time he comes back, it feels different,” Wolfe said. “But this time, he came back better than ever. He’s much more focused. He ran those eight miles and for once I didn’t have to drag his ass along.”

Wolfe, 42, who won eight world titles in four weight classes during her own illustrious boxing career, acknowledges that the demands she places on fighters are such that not everyone can or is willing to pay the price of keeping up.

“Some fighters can’t handle it,” she said. “But I know how to take someone to the breaking point and then to build him back up. Each time I take them to their limit, I’m able to take them a little further the next time.”

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Maybe Wolfe and Kirkland can break up to make up because they are so alike, in so many ways. Kirkland is a devastating puncher with a mean streak in the ring; so was Wolfe, who posted a 24-1 record with 16 victories inside the distance, some of the knockouts of the spectacular variety. Wolfe is widely regarded as the most lights-out puncher in women's boxing history.

Take the takeout shot the 5'9" Wolfe delivered to the chin of 6'6" Vonda Ward, a former star for the University of Tennessee women's basketball team, on May 8, 2004, in Biloxi, Miss. Barely a minute had elapsed in the first round when Wolfe came in over the top with a right hand that landed flush. Ward was unconscious even as she was on her way to the canvas. She had to be removed from the ring on a stretcher.

So, how often is Wolfe asked about that punch, which is often included in video compilations of boxing's greatest knockouts?

"I damn near killed the lady," said Wolfe, who added that Laila Ali ducked her as if she were a low overhang. "Of course I'm going to get asked about it."

The same might be said of Kirkland, whose power is as formidable and indisputable as Wolfe's. If you like no-doubt-about-it knockouts, Kirkland is at or near the top of the list of must-see attractions.

"With James Kirkland, the only time I get worried is when his sparring partners don't get sent to the hospital," Wolfe said.

All of which leads one to wonder why Kirkland, this unbridled force of nature, is unranked by all the world sanctioning bodies. Maybe that's because of inactivity; this is his first fight in 19 months. Maybe it's because he hasn't always shown the kind of discipline he needs to be at peak efficiency. It was one of the biggest shockers in boxing when, as an overwhelming favorite, an overweight and seemingly disinterested Kirkland was dropped three times in a first-round stoppage by Japan's Nobu Ishida on April 9, 2011.

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Tapia is ranked No. 3 by the WBO and No. 10 by the IBF, but the Passaic, N.J., native said he realizes most people consider him the underdog because they remember who Kirkland is, or at least who he is supposed to be.

“This fight means everything to me,” Tapia said. “This is my life. This is the step I have to take. I can’t wait any longer to show everybody I’m a great fighter.

“This is Kirkland’s chance, too, to show everybody he’s not done. But only one of us is going to leave the ring happy, and I’m going to be the guy who’s smiling. It’s not just about whether you win or lose. It’s *how* you win. Boxing is entertainment. You have to give the people a show. You have to give them their money’s worth.

“Look, I don’t want anybody to say I beat James Kirkland because he’s been off a long time or whatever. I want him to be at his best because I don’t want him to have no excuses when I beat him.”

Kirkland said Tapia needn’t worry about him being at his best. He said he certainly will be just that, and it will be more than good enough.

“I know the guy is pretty good and he’s coming to win,” Kirkland said. “But I’m going to show him and everybody else that I’m still James Kirkland.”

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Radam G says:

This odd couple probably has the greatest chemistry of all times between a trainer and fighter. The mermaid Ann Wolfe is the only boxer who ever scared the hebejeebeez outta of me.

She challenged me to a sparring session, and said that she was gonna whup my "lil yellow

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Filipino @ss and then f*** it." As I said so many times in the past, I almost pissed in my jock strap and boxing cup. But I ain't no PUNK! I told her to wait until after I go to the bathroom.

I went to the bathroom, jumped out the window and ran away from the gym like a BYYTCHHH! Hehehe! It's been over 10 years since she saw me in the gym with her.

It is a time for everything under the sun. And that time was for me to lie and fly. I was not really to die. Don't judge me, y'all. We are all scare of something and somebody, unless you are stone crazy.

I'm thinking about fibbing to the Mermaid Wolfe that I had to jump through the "sh*t-room window to help a damsel in distress on those mean-SoCal streets or I would've sparred with her. Hahaha! Holla!

brownsugar says:

I don't know much about Tapia... But I heard that Kirkland blows up to 220 lbs during his frequent layoffs.

Anne Wolfe at one time transformed Kirkland into a volume punching nigh invulnerable brawler but as much as I'm pleased about hearing about the two reuniting again I don't believe James will be a much of a force again at 154 and don't believe he has the chin or boxing skill to compete at 160 (even though he really should be fighting at middle or supermiddleweight) Kirkland story is one of tragically missed opportunities.

brownsugar says:

Funny story RG lol.

Bernie Campbell says:

Too bad James cant get this clear! Im sure hed probably have more success than Esther Rolle!

brownsugar says:

Kirkland weighed in at roughly 156..so maybe the Wolfe protocol is having its effect.

Bernie Campbell says:

With Ester Rolle not than Ester Eolle! Please dont deficate on my posts!

Radam G says:

B-Camp, you are seriously slipping. Hehehe! Is it a disk or neuron? Holla!

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Did you guys hear the "Mermaid" Anne Wolfe. She caught up with the Genie Naazim for corner talk. Hehehe! She called the "Mandingo Warrior" Kirkland the N-word and said: "You have taken his balls, now take his soul." WTF! That is some classic _____!

The Mermaid Anne scare me more than the devil. But I ain't hating her. She is one of a kind. Holla!

Carmine Cas says:

She's crazy, after the stoppage she looked like Adonis Stevenson a la Chad Dawson. She should fight GGG, I bet she won't be scared LOL

SouthPaul says:

Those were classic comments by Anne Wolfe. Funny story too, Radam. Shes most def a scary broad. I also agree with Brown Sugar. Kirkland ain't gonna be around long not as far as any type of long term dominate champ. He's fun to watch, though. Reminds me a bit like Clifford Etienne. Kirkland like Etienne recovers quickly after being stunned and rocked. Just when you think they might be gas'd and ready to go... They bounce back with volumes of punching. Been a while since I've watched any of my old VHS tapes but thats what I recall about Etienne vs Clay Bey (one example) which was a very fun bout to watch.

Radam G says:

Clifford Etienne is a MENSA with two college degrees and is in da PEN for life. What a crying shame. I think that the Texan "Mandingo Warrior" is going to fool some people. I can see him with three more good years and beating down Canelo, Lara, Ortiz and Molina. Holla!

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The Shadow says:

[QUOTE=Radam G;41031]Clifford Etienne is a MENSA with two college degrees and is in da PEN for life. What a crying shame. I think that the Texan "Mandingo Warrior" is going to fool some people. I can see him with three more good years and beating down Canelo, Lara, Ortiz and Molina. Holla![/QUOTE]

Get the HELL out of here, Radam, are you serious?? What degrees does that dude have?? He's typical con. He's one of them brothers that got locked up and converted to Islam. Why in the world would he have two degrees and then go rob people from the car in broad daylight or

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whatever the heck he did?

As for Kirkland, he should be in Toughman Contests. He ain't facing, much less beating Lara or Molina anytime soon. He's with 50 and 50 is not welcome with GBP. Although Ortiz would be a fun fight! He might beat that guy.

It would be the Caveman vs. The Surfer Boy.

the Roast says:

Smoger is one of the best Refs going today but he really messed up stopping this fight. No reason for that kid to take those last two shots. The fight could have been stopped in the corner between any of the last few rounds. Tapia was done.

Radam G says:

Wow! The Shadow, never be surprised of how humans with skills and top education can fall. First! I know a medical doctor in San Diego, Cali, who quit his profession and became a homeless drunk begging for beer and whisky from movie stars and athletes. And a PhD who quit his profession and started working at McDonald's for bottom pay. Also, holla at the life story of Howard Huge. He enjoyed being a hobo and hitch-hiking.

CE has a B.S. in political science from Grambling State University and a B.S. in Kinesiology from LSU. I'm sure that you can find the educational background of about every single boxers. Nowadays, at least half of all boxers have been to college and have accredited degrees.

Some people just cannot help a weirdness about themselves. As I told before, the feared big wig in U.S. amateur boxing in the 70\$, 80\$ and early 90\$ -- Retired Army Col. Bob Cough syrup -- use to pi\$\$ his pants and get caught stealing cough drops and syrup and chewing gum from hotels stores at every single amateur boxing event around the world. Holla!

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That's unreal!! After you posted that, I realized that the guy was some sort of gifted kid. He now sells art from prison. Check this out: [url]http://fineartamerica.com/profiles/clifford-etienne.html

I also dig investigative digging. I found out who Cough Syrup is. While doing the digging, I sort of got the idea that Mike Tyson didn't even just get the shaft behind closed doors; it was common knowledge to everyone there! Is that true?

Also found out that Mitch Green knew Mike Tyson, Holy, Womack, Tillman and Biggs and all those guys from the amateurs so they were no strangers when they had their little street fight.

It really is a fascinating and tight knit community, isn't it?

The Shadow says:

[QUOTE=Radam G;41053]Wow! The Shadow, never be surprised of how humans with skills and top education can fall. First! I know a medical doctor in San Diego, Cali, who quit his profession and became a homeless drunk begging for beer and whisky from movie stars and athletes. And a PhD who quit his profession and started working at McDonald's for bottom pay. Also, holla at the life story of Howard Huges. He enjoyed being a hobo and hitch-hiking.

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I also found out that dude was on the Dean's list in each of his semesters. W.T.F!

I also dig some investigative digging and I found out who Cough Syrup is. (Google got this feature where they have old newspaper articles that still aren't online in url-format.)

That guy seems like a shady cat. While doing the digging, I sort of got the idea that Mike Tyson didn't even just get the shaft behind closed doors; it was common knowledge to everyone there!

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SouthPaul says:

Some interesting conversation coming off these boards. Wow to the Etienne link. Why in the world was this guy out robbing when he had just made something like a million dollars from the Tyson bout?????!!?????!!?

amayseng says:

[QUOTE=Radam G;41017]Did you guys hear the "Mermaid" Anne Wolfe. She caught up with the Genie Naazim for corner talk. Hehehe! She called the "Mandingo Warrior" Kirkland the N-word and said: "You have taken his balls, now take his soul." WTF! That is some classic _____!

The Mermaid Anne scare me more than the devil. But I ain't hating her. She is one of a kind. Holla![/QUOTE]

I did catch that, and I thought , she is not to be messed with in any way.

There is two types of crazy, she fits the one that would beat someone to near death...

amayseng says:

Kirkland is a beast but like i said in another thread he EATS punches to land his. GGG would destroy him. Sergio M would box him for a bit and then get him out as well. He doesnt slip or roll anything, he just takes them. I can see some issues post fighting for him. Glad to see him back in the ring though, hope he stays out of trouble.

Ann Wolfe is a bad dude....

ha

Shoulder Roll Defense says:

I thought Gatti was bad defensively until I saw Kirkland. However, he is damn near impossible to beat at 154 with Wolfe in his corner. I would love to see him fight Canelo. Canelo wouldn't be able to rest and take rounds off like he usually does. Holla!

Radam G says:

@The Shadow, YUP! No doubt that the super elites of the game are "a close-knitted" small bunch.

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Oh, YES! Bob Cough Syrup was wide open with his dirt causing hurt and hate. Dude kicked the greatest combined U.S. amateur-and-professional guru -- Joe Clough -- off from being the head-coach or any type of coach on the 1984 U.S. Olympic boxing team, because JC had/has an African-American wife. BCS openly said that " no white men ain't ready to see a p***er wood with a Negress picky-nicky wife coaching an American Olympic Team"

JC took his services to other countries and has produced the most O-Games medalists from different countries. JC has coached in India, Thailand, Taiwan and the Philippines, just to name a few countries.

JC was originally the boxing coach of the famous Tacoma (Washington) Boys' Clubs before becoming the head coaching/training dawg of the famed Muhammad Ali (amateur) Boxing Club of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

I syet you not. BCS was straight-up crazy. I'm shocked that other boxers, who's reading my true-dat info ain't riding shotgun with me. Holla!

Radam G says:

@SRD, if Canelo ever develop cojones and fight the Texan "Mandingo Warrior," it would be a quick fight. And I have a toss up of who would go the sleep early. Holla!

The Shadow says:

[QUOTE=Radam G;41087]@The Shadow, YUP! No doubt that the super elites of the game are "a close-knitted" small bunch.

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Do you know Mitch Green, too? What was the deal with that guy?

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Radam G says:

Of course I personally know Mitch, da he bytch. He is full of jive. And such a foool that he will punch a bee hive. Holla!