

A Note on Broner-Maidana

Written by Thomas Hauser
Monday, 16 December 2013 10:56



Gordon Marino has written, "You can't get into boxing without an ego. But you have to keep an eye on it."

Self-control has never been 24-year-old Adrien Broner's strong point. Much of his life has been a study in excess.

This summer, Broner sat for a video that showed him half-dressed while purportedly defecating into a toilet in Popeye's and then wiping himself with United States currency. The video was posted on YouTube with the title "Adrien Broner takes a s--t in Popeye's." Four days later, it had close to 50,000 hits. The posted comments were not favorable: "Lowlife scum . . . What a effing idiot . . . Retarded . . . Cancer to society . . . Disgusting a-----e . . . His kids are doomed . . . Keep up the good role modeling, Broner."

Undeterred, Broner posted a sex video in October. This one showed him having intercourse with two women and no condom. On-line comments from viewers indicated that Adrien has more of a future as a fighter than as an X-rated film star.

The circus is fun. But sooner or later, most kids outgrow it. There's a line between being your own man and doing things that are self-destructive.

"I was young once too," trainer Don Turner (who has worked with fighters like Larry Holmes and Evander Holyfield) says. "That's no excuse. Everybody was young once. You make choices."

Earlier this year, Broner was being hyped as "the future of boxing." And he'd come to believe

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the hype that was accompanying his ring success.

“Boxing is hit and don’t get hit,” Adrien told the media. “It’s not, hit, okay, now you hit me. I don’t care if I come out my whole career without getting touched. I’m not in it to go in there and let someone beat up my face. That’s not how you do it. Stay slick.”

But Broner was hitting and not getting hit against lesser fighters. And as Don Turner notes, “You have to be on the receiving end sometimes to know what this game is about. You have to be tested, so you learn how to pass the tests.”

Then, in June, Broner challenged Paulie Malignaggi for the WBA 147-pound title and emerged with a split-decision triumph. But the bloom was off the rose. Malignaggi exposed some of Adrien’s limitations: the wide spread of his feet that inhibits movement, his vulnerability to attack, the inability to transition seamlessly from defense to offense.

But Paulie didn’t have the firepower to finish the job. Adrien upped his record to 27-and-0. That set the stage for the December 14th match-up between Broner and Marcos Maidana.

Maidana is a volume puncher who gives one hundred percent every time out. His record was 34-and-3 with 30 knockouts. But he’d barely survived a shopworn Erik Morales and struggled in victories over Victor Ortiz, Jesus Soto-Karass, and Josesito Lopez. His idea of defense is sitting on his stool between rounds.

Broner was a 3-to-1 betting favorite. However, in most of Adrien’s previous fights, in addition to his skills, he’d enjoyed a size and strength advantage over his opponent. That wouldn’t be the case against Maidana.

Thus, Jimmy Tobin wrote, “Maidana has the power to put Broner’s lights out and the toughness to take second and third helpings of whatever leather he is served. Maidana also boasts the puncher’s resolve, that stubborn arrogance that concedes damage to reciprocate it exponentially. He will not temper his aggression simply because he is punished for it and he has crawled off the deck to practically invade two other prematurely-anointed superstars [Victor

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Ortiz and Amir Khan]. He is never an easy out.”

Boxer versus puncher is one type of classic match-up in boxing. Another is fighters who quit (e.g. Mike Tyson and Andrew Golota) versus fighters who don't (e.g. Arturo Gatti). Everyone knew that Maidana wouldn't quit. The jury was out on Broner.

It was an exciting action fight.

Adrien views himself as a master craftsman. Marcos is a simple brickmaker, but he makes a lot of bricks and was in attack mode all night.

Ten seconds into round one, Maidana tagged Broner with a left hook that propelled Adrien into the ropes. Suddenly Broner had a bad case of the wobbles, and Marcos was all over him. Later in the round, Adrien spun out of the corner and thrust his hips against Maidana's rear end, simulating anal intercourse. Showtime (the network that prides itself on the mini-series *Masters of Sex*) chose not to replay the moment in the sixty seconds between rounds. More significantly, referee Laurence Cole let it pass, which was a prelude to his losing control of the fight. Broner led with his head, raked his gloves across Maidana's face, and used his forearms and elbows as offensive weapons throughout the bout. Marcos went low often enough that it was also an issue.

Meanwhile, twenty-five seconds into round two, Broner was floored by a left hook, the first time in his pro career that he'd been on the canvas. He rose on shaky legs and took a pounding.

That set the pattern for bout. Maidana was relentless, winging punches from all angles with both hands and keeping the pressure on all night. Broner is accustomed to pot-shotting opponents who can't hurt him. Here, Maidana exchanged because he wanted to, and Broner traded blows when he had no choice. Often, Adrien held on like he and Marcos were slow-dancing.

Simon and Garfunkel sang, “I'd rather be a hammer than a nail,” and Broner was the nail to Maidana's hammer. Marcos beat the confidence out of him and exposed one more flaw:

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Adrien's inability to make adjustments during a fight.

Midway through round eight, a left hook up top put Broner on the canvas for the second time. He rose; Maidana came in for the kill; Adrien clinched; and Marcos headbutted him. Broner thought about the situation for a moment. Then, looking very much like a drowning man who has just seen a life preserver bobbing in the water, he gave a thespian performance that saw him sink to the canvas (carefully, so as to break his fall with his knee) and roll over onto his back while simulating agony. When finally he rose, he refused to answer the referee's query, "Are you all right?" Cole then deducted a point from Maidana for the headbutt and, to Adrien's apparent dismay, decreed that the fight should continue. Lost in the drama was the fact that Broner's performance had earned him an additional seventy seconds to recover from the knockdown.

When it was over, Broner had been outlanded by a 269-to-149 margin that included a 231-to-122 disadvantage in power punches. Adrien's best punch of the night was a cheap-shot left hook to the jaw after the bell ending round eleven. He talked the talk before the bout but didn't walk the walk when it counted. The judges scored the fight 117-109, 116-109, and 115-110 for Maidana.

In some ways, the most disheartening aspect of the evening for Broner was how limited his ring skills (as opposed to his natural physical gifts) looked. Maidana has limitations. Last year, Devon Alexander won ten out of ten rounds against him and made Marcos look like an amateur by simply moving and jabbing.

Broner left the ring immediately after the bout and refused to give an on-air interview. Later that evening, he told Barry Tompkins, "I'm still young, fly, and flashy. We're going to live tomorrow like we won the fight. I'm still going to party. My first party is going to be on Tuesday in Cincinnati. If you want me in your club. I will be in your club. We're gonna have fun."

That's part of the problem.

Broner is a good fighter with potential that has not yet been fully developed. The question is, where does he go from here? Does he work to get better, or does he go back to fighting less challenging opponents and leave it at that?

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Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thausen@rcn.com. His most recent book (*Straight Writes and Jabs: An Inside Look at Another Year in Boxing*) has just been published by the University of Arkansas Press.

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Grimm says:

There's a basic drill I like. Boxer A stands in a corner. Boxer B advances, lets his hands go with left jab, straight right, left hook. Boxer A blocks, parry, goes under - and counter. Then boxer C, D and E follows, and when done, immediately stand in line to repeat. It goes on for a round, after which A generally is tired - but also has automatized his reactions to the techniques. Some find it mentally disturbing to stand in that corner for 3 minutes, as the tempo increases as well as the power of the punches. The receiving boxer will always miss some, and thus eat some good old leather, since it's all done with force, speed and real intentions.

One day, a guy walked into the gym. He was dressed in tight linen, had a haircut like Balboa, and his chest full of air. Guess he had done some training, somewhere, sometime - but not much, and not correct. Early on, he smacked the younger and smaller boxers around. I told him to cut it. He scowled, and went on to strike a pose in front of the mirror. The guy was a comedy cliché, but didn't see it. They never do.

Anyway, midway thru the session, he found himself standing in that corner. From the middle of the ring, an endless stream of boxers were coming towards him, unleashing their 3-punch-combos. 30 seconds into the drill, as it's getting more heated and the pressure mounts, he calls for a halt.

Me: "What's the matter?"

Him: "They hit too hard."

Me: "I know."

Him: "Tell them to stop."

Me: "You know you're in a boxing gym, right?"

Never saw the guy again. My figurative point: Broner - no tight linen, but flexing his muscles and mouth - should have done that drill against some mean men before the fight - not during it. Then he would've known. When a boxer has done his drills, survived the gym wars, made that journey against 25+ opponents, he is supposed to know what he is made of. If he doesn't know it, he hasn't done his homework. He hadn't.

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SouthPaul says:

Theres been a lot good feed back on this topic over the last couple days but that right there takes the prize. Well said, Grimm!

Spinach Chin says:

Thing that impressed this corner was El Chino's combination punching. Throwing his shots in unpredictable arcs, and mostly 4-5 at a time, really caught AB by surprise round after round. Broner fought like a puncher but obviously he can't hurt welters the way he did lightweights.

amayseng says:

Great Story Grimm and great point.

AB has probably been sparring lesser competition goofing around, then Chino handed his *** to him.

He will never be the same because he never experienced that in the gym.

The Shadow says:

Great post, Grimm!

Carmine Cas says:

Excellent point Grimm.

Now was Broner beating up the money team when they sparred?

The Shadow says:

[QUOTE=Carmine Cas;41494]Excellent point Grimm.

Now was Broner beating up the money team when they sparred?[/QUOTE]

He was. Some white dude, Lydell Rhodes and J'Leon Love.

You may remember Lydell as the dude who bitch-smacked The GOAT Charlie Z after the punk sucker punched Big Floyd.

CPX says:

Well said Grimm!

brownsugar says:

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Fascinating story Grimm