

Dissapointing Doublehead

Written by Steve Kim

Tuesday, 10 December 2002 21:00

It was like going to the movies and expecting
to see 'The Godfather' and coming out thinking you had seen 'Ishtar'.
Ok, it wasn't THAT much of a letdown
when Floyd Mayweather out-boxed Jose
Luis Castillo to retain his WBC lightweight title and Wladimir
Klitschko took ten rounds to stop Jameel McCline.

But it was a letdown. Instead of getting a heated rematch between the
two premiere 135-pounders in the world, we got a track
meet that was won by 'the Pretty Boy'.
And Klitschko, thought to be the immediate heir apparent to
Lennox Lewis on top of the heavyweight throne, proved
that the future is not now - and may not be for a
little while.

Mayweather will tell anyone who will listen that he is the best fighter
in the world pound-for-pound. On this night all he
proved is that he is the most elusive and fastest in retreat.
Guys like this were the type of guys
that the great Julio Cesar Chavez would have
chased down, engulfed and swallowed up in the late rounds.
Castillo, a former sparring partner for
the legendary Mexican, is no JC Superstar. But at least he
tried to press on and make a fight. In fact, there's no fight
without him. While Castillo may be no Chavez, it's
unfortunate that Mayweather isn't anything like his Uncle Roger either.
'The Black Mamba' never stunk out
a joint quite like this- especially against a
Mexican fighter.

It's apparent that Mayweather simply isn't a dominating 135-pounder.
Gone are the days when he'd step up to another level
to thrash the likes of Genaro Hernandez, Angel Manfredy
and Diego Corrales. In 24 rounds with the
game Castillo, he proved that while he might be the
premiere lightweight in the game, he isn't lapping the
field anymore; he's only a few steps ahead of it.

The main event from the Mandalay Bay on this night was the
heavyweight title between Klitschko and McCline. The hulking
Ukranian has been ordained by HBO as the heavyweight

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of the future and the push is already on to make him the
game's new star. He was matched on
this night against 'Big Time' McCline, who was a relative
novice to the sport and was considered a fledgling
journeyman as late as a year-and-a-half ago.
After dispatching the likes of Michael
Grant, Lance Whitaker and Shannon Briggs- ironically, three other
past HBO creations that flamed out- he was being hailed by
Jim Lampley as the best current American
heavyweight.

But I had my doubts (as I pointed out in my last column), I mean
c'mon, anyone that freezes up against Briggs simply
couldn't be counted on to show up big against Klitschko.
And that's exactly what happened this
past weekend, as McCline was reluctant to
mount any kind of consistent offensive attack against Klitschko.
For his part, Klitschko wasn't overly
impressive himself. He seemed awfully content to fight at
the slow pace by McCline and as one person said to me, "One guy
was afraid of the other, and the other guy was
happy about it".

But in the few times that McCline did throw punches in anger,
Klitschko didn't seem to respond all that well.
He seemed reluctant to hang in the
pocket, slip or parry punches and then counter. Instead, he went on
some full out retreats that would have
done France proud. It's clear that when
someone gets inside his reach and backs him up, he could be
in some trouble. But that wouldn't be a problem on
this night as he faced a guy, that in the words of Larry Merchant,"
punched from the backseat."

Larry, it looked like he was punching from the trunk.

Mayweather and Klitschko had their hands raised in victory, but
really nobody won on this night.

SHANE, SHANE, SHANE

A good source tells me that Shane Mosley is demanding \$8 million
for a rematch with Oscar De La Hoya.
De La Hoya and Top Rank Boxing aren't
going to give him much more than \$4 million.

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Somebody needs to tell 'Sugar' Shane that he's currently on a two fight losing streak and that Oscar can pick and choose whoever he fights and still make a great payday. Unfortunately, Mosley may be stuck fighting a Winky Wright for substantially less money in the end because of his hard-line stance.

At the post-fight press conference for Mayweather-McCline, Bob Arum basically told me that they were moving on without Mosley and that 'the Golden Boy' might be embarking on a world tour that includes Germany and Japan, where De La Hoya can literally fight anybody and get paid at least \$10 million per fight. People hated to hear it then and they'll hate to hear it now, but Oscar was right when he said that he really did dictate to the others about when big fights take place against him and for how much.

But the sad part for Mosley is that regardless of what he'd get paid to fight De La Hoya again, that's a very winnable fight for him because his hand speed will always trouble Oscar. Perhaps Arum went into negotiations with Mosley hoping for him to negotiate himself out of the bout and was more than willing to go in a different direction when that occurred.

Ironically, the guy who's looking good for another De La Hoya payday is Fernando Vargas. Yes, the same guy who Oscar swore up and down that he'd never give a payday to- may give him two. Why? Because the numbers were so huge for their first bout in September (over 900,000 buys) that a rematch is a given. The first Mosley bout on the other hand did right around 600,000 buys - something that Oscar can do boxing against a mannequin.

Yes, boxing is a business.

MERCHANT MAN

After months of speculation, it was made official by HBO that they have re-signed Larry Merchant to a four-year contract.

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I for one applaud this move. While others on the HBO team can be
skills and lose their perspective, Merchant
is often the voice of reason and the conscious of the broadcast.

I'm just guessing here, but I think this is most likely his last contract
before riding off into the sunset and I have a
feeling that he's going out with a blaze of glory.

He said about Mayweather, something to the effect that
Mayweather was reluctant to fight in Los Angeles
or New York and that based on what he was watching,
Los Angeles and New York should consider themselves lucky.

Classic Merchant. For better or worse, there will never be another
one like him.