

BAD is Back... Or Is It?

Written by Evan Korn

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HBO, in its December incarnation of the once-flourishing “Boxing After Dark,” appears to have gotten things right for once.

On Saturday, undefeated Jason Litzau, a marketable (white) Featherweight makes his HBO debut against Jose Hernandez. Then, in the main event, top-5 Middleweight contender Edison Miranda makes his HBO debut against the tough-as-nails Philadelphia bruiser, Willie Gibbs.

This, folks, is what makes BAD good.

Honest fighters receiving exposure.

Miranda—coming off a disputed defeat against German-based Arthur Abraham in Wetzlar, Germany—deserves his time to shine.

Gibbs, in his off-TV barnburner against Lenord Pierre this past March, rallied to knock out the Kevin Rooney protégé in the final round.

Litzau has won five in a row since his life-and-death, up from the canvas battle of attrition against John Nolasco.

Hernandez has, um, let’s see... okay, so three out of four live bodies is not bad.

Despite Hernandez’s suspect credentials, this card is BAD at its (near) best. It’s the type of show that harkens back to the days when Lou DiBella was HBO’s ace matchmaker. You remember those days, don’t you? Barrera. Morales. Ibeabuchi. Gatti. It was darn good.

On Saturday, young guns like Miranda and Litzau have the opportunity to elevate themselves from contenders to primetime legends.

With BAD’s recent fiascos, the question has to be asked: Is this show an aberration or trend? If past years are any indication, the former is the more likely scenario.

We’ve seen glimmers of hope from BAD before, when a great fight would inspire people to flood message boards with “BAD is back” posts.

In 2003, BAD gave us Gatti-Ward I. Then, the very next card After Dark was a yawner of a headliner, Fernando Vargas-Fitz Vanderpool. The only thing that saved that debacle was an emerging Manny Pacquiao on the undercard.

In 2004, a solid tripleheader featuring Rocky Juarez, Juan Diaz and Kermit Cintron in separate bouts was a promising blip on the radar screen.

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And in 2005, BAD hit the skids, and the suits at HBO promised to make it up to the fans.

The Litzau-Miranda-Gibbs card is an early Christmas present in a year stacked with lumps of coal.

Sure, every BAD fight can't be Barrera-McKinney or Gatti-Rodriguez I and II, but fans have the right to demand consistency.

Consistency, my friends, has not been a virtue of the matchmakers at HBO. Most of the time, like our dear friend Nicole Ritchie, it is like they are hopped up on weed and Vicodin driving on the wrong side of the freeway.

Maybe, just maybe, the BAD series will jump the divider into sanity.

With a Paul Malignaggi-Edner Cherry/Sechew Powell-Ishe Smith card on the burner for the February show, a level of consistency appears to be returning to this storied franchise.

But as we have seen in years past, the only guarantees in the boxing world are Don King, bad judging and inept sanctioning bodies, which—ironically—might be related to one another.

That being said, here is to BAD at its (near) best.

Here is to hoping Litzau, Hernandez, Gibbs and Miranda justify us staying home on Saturday evening. Because if this card turns out to be just another lump of coal instead of an old-fashioned Boxing After Dark extravaganza, we might as well let this series roast on an open fire.