

Helloooo. Anyone listening out there?

Written by Rick Folstad

Sunday, 02 November 2003 18:14

It didn't come as a surprise that hardly anyone called.

After all, the snubbing of Winky Wright has become legendary in the fight game. He's about as popular as tooth decay and as ignored as a bum on a street corner begging for loose change. The guy couldn't organize a parade of four without bribing family members.

And it's not that Winky has bad breath or poor table manners or an obnoxious laugh. He doesn't spit in your face or call you names or throw rocks at your car. He's just the opposite, one of those polite guys who is honest and straight forward and who will ask you how your family is doing if he knows you have one.

But he's also the only junior-middleweight champion of the world who can't get a big-money fight. He's tried. Damn, he's tried. He's done everything legal he can to stir up some excitement, to light a fire under a big name, any big name. He's cajoled, pleaded, argued, threatened, bribed, and taunted.

Still hasn't worked.

That's why he's fighting Angel Hernandez on Saturday night instead of Shane Mosley or Oscar De La Hoya or Bernard Hopkins. That's why he's on another undercard instead of fighting the main event.

That's why hardly anyone called Monday when they held a teleconference call with Wright and Jermain Taylor, who, like Wright, is also fighting on the Roy Jones Jr. - Antonio Tarver undercard Saturday.

The entire call with both fighters lasted about 10 minutes, most of that time spent listening to Taylor answer three or four questions about his upcoming fight with Rogelio Martinez.

When Wright was on the phone, he told all five of us (told you it was a small crowd) what we already knew.

"It's very frustrating," he said when asked how hard it was for him to be on the second or third page of every big-name fighter's list of possible opponents. "You get in line for a big fight and then they don't want to fight you. I want to prove to myself and the world that I'm one of the best fighters out there, but I can't get a fight (with the big names). They're scared to fight me and I guess that means I am one of the best fighters in the world."

Wright's only loss one of his three losses was a majority decision to Fernando Vargas. Since their fight, Vargas has gone on to fight guys like De La Hoya and Felix Trinidad.

Winky has gone on to fight guys like Robert Frazier, Bronco McKart, and J.C. Candelo.

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"I might not do everything great, but I do everything good," said Wright, who sounded almost tired on Tuesday, like he was fed up with the whole thing. "And they know I'm going to be in shape, so they don't want to fight me."

Angel Hernandez wants to fight him, but he's not going to make Wright a millionaire or, more important, he's not going to give Wright a chance to become the undisputed junior-middleweight champ of the world.

Until something sane happens - until Mosley decides he wants his shot at Wright and the undisputed title - Wright will just stick with his promoter and wait his turn. Jones has been finding Wright some steady work, booking him on the undercard of his own fights.

"Without Roy right now, I don't know where I'd be," said Wright, who doesn't mind being on the undercard of the man he calls the best pound-for-pound fighter out there. "I used to have promoters who promised me a marquee fight, but then they wouldn't get it for me. But good things come to those who wait."

If that's true, Wright is due for a great ride.