

World War III? No Thank You.

Written by Rick Folstad

Wednesday, 27 November 2002 21:00

A third fight? Sure. How about we celebrate a third car wreck, a third forest fire, a third earthquake?
You want a third fight between Arturo "Thunder" Gatti and "Irish" Mickey Ward, you can have it without me.

I'll settle for the first two fights and much. hope they weren't already too much. Why? Because I'd like to see Mickey Ward walk away from the fight game with a small fortune in his pocket and a good share of his memory still intact.
I want to see him hit the guest-speaker circuit, do some commercials, try talk radio. I don't want to hear him stumbling over his words when he's 50 or forgetting where he lives or how to drive a car. For Ward, there's a lot more bad that could come out of a third fight than good. You have to remember that fighting isn't like building houses or selling cars or adding numbers. Carpenters, salesmen and accountants don't go to war when they go to work. They don't bleed or feel their bones crack or get hit with wild right hands that can knock you silly and keep you there.
The best fighters - guys like Gatti and Ward - leave it all out there for the world to see and sometimes, they don't get it all back. You've only got so much fight in you and nothing steals it away quicker than a ring war. Eventually, you've got nothing left to give. That's the problem with Ward. He's too tough for his own good. It's not that he doesn't know when to quit. It's that he doesn't know how to quit, doesn't understand the concept. You can admire that in him all you want - and I do - but if he was your son or your brother or your best friend, would you want him fighting Gatti a third time?
Would you want to see him go to war again? As for Gatti, he came out of the second fight looking fine, if you don't mind the inconvenience of a broken right hand. He did something special Saturday night, something most of us had never seen him do before. He actually boxed instead of brawled. For one of the few times in his career, he was the matador instead of the bull. He planted himself, threw combinations and then got the hell out of the way. He was rocked

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a few times, but you don't go 10 rounds with Mickey Ward and get
away without spilling some coffee on yourself.
Though he didn't know it at the time,
Gatti broke his right hand in the third round when he caught Ward
with "one of the greatest right hands I've
ever thrown." No kidding. After he was hit,
Ward looked like a guy staggering away from a car
wreck. The punch didn't land on
Mickey Ward's left ear as much as it crashed there.
Suddenly, Ward was looking at three Arturo
Gattis instead of one and that had to be a little intimidating.
Still, Ward fought a hard fight and never backed off.
"Whatever street he was born on, they
should name it after Mickey Ward," George Foreman said
late in the fight with Ward losing big but still swinging.
"That's a man." And Gatti knew it. "There are not too
many guys like Mickey Ward around," he said after
the fight. It all goes back to the
big right hand. Ward was never the same after that. Let's
hope his career doesn't end up landing a right hand of its
own.