This Saturday night in his hometown of Grand Rapids, Michigan, Floyd Mayweather makes another defense of his WBC lightweight crown when he takes on the dangerous and hard-punching South African, Phillip Ndou.

Now usually around this time before his fights, 'the Pretty Boy' starts becoming 'the Petty Boy' and will start bitching and moaning about his promoter, Bob Arum and just generally complaining about everything surrounding his professional career.
But guess what? This time around there's nothing but silence. In fact, things are rather hunky-dory between the two.

" No," said a happy Arum." as a matter of fact David Mayo(a boxing scribe for the Grand Rapids Press) called me and said that he was shocked. He was talking with Floyd and all Floyd did was praise me. I think there's a reason for that."

What!?!? This is like the Hatfield's and the McCoys breaking bread, Nas and Jay-Z teaming up on a single, Liza Minelli and David Gest renewing their wedding vows. What gives? Easy. The absence of one James Prince as Mayweathers 'manager'. You notice I put quotations around the word 'manager' because Prince really can't be considered a manager in the true sense of the word.

After all, a real manager, nurtures a guys career, picks and chooses a fighters opponents, negotiates their contracts and helps them along their way. Prince, hasn't really exhibited any of those traits. What he seems to be good at is hustling these guys with the promise of their own hip-hop record labels- since Prince made his money in the rap industry- and living the lifestyle of a platinum rapper.

Take the case of Mayweather, things were going along almost perfectly for him until hooking up with him in 1999. At that time, Arum had negotiated a deal with HBO that called for six fights for approximately $12 million. An ecstatic Arum would call to break the news to his young fighter, only to be scolded by him and told that it was a 'slave contract'. Things didn't get any better as Mayweather would eventually jettison his own father, Floyd Sr., from not only his corner and his managerial duties, but from his house. Ouch.

And get this, while the father received only 10-percent for both training and managing his son, Prince was to receive 20-percent for supposedly managing the young Mayweathers career.

The kicker is that Mayweather after much haggling would eventually sign the same deal that he labeled as a 'slave contract' but ended up giving up 20-percent to Prince. Who seemed to do nothing more than show up to Mayweathers fights, show up on the camera and talk to someone on the cell phone. Not exactly Doc Kearns or Shelly Finkel, I'd say.

In between this whole episode, the relationship between the promoter and company was one of

the most adversarial in recent memory. You'd be hard pressed to find a relationship in boxing, between two sides that were supposedly working together, that was as rocky as this one. The last few fights, it was well known throughout the industry that Prince was receiving up to a half-million dollars for his services every time Mayweather fought. Mind you, this was for fights that were essentially made by Top Rank with the approval of HBO.

I guess not having to give up a half-million to a guy talking on the cell phone, while your taking punches, would improve anybodies outlook on things.

" What else could I attribute it to?" asked Arum, on his suddenly improved relationship with Mayweather." Floyd knows- or should know now- that we were always in his corner and that we weren't as responsible for any dissension that occurred in the past. And we're still in Floyd's corner, I think he's a terrific fighter and I think with this change in his mental outlook, I think we can now resume and bring him to the stardom he really craves."

But how much irreversible damage has been done? Mayweathers persona and troubles outside the ring have stifled what momentum he had prior to his problems with Arum and HBO.

And despite taking on as many solid opponents as any world class fighter in recent years(Jose Luis Castillo twice, Jesus Chavez, Carlos Hernandez, Victoriano Sosa, Angel Manfredy, Diego Corrales and Genaro Hernandez), Mayweathers ratings have been mediocre at best. And there was talk throughout the industry that HBO, after his current deal runts its course, would look to downgrade his licensing fee's. There's no doubting his abilities, he is one of the premiere boxers in the game, it seems the only thing that can stop him is a set of brittle hands that have hampered him recently. But what about his marketability? In this industry, it's every bit as important as how good you are inside the ring.

Arum mentions that he has one more bout with Mayweather under his current deal but would definitely like to work with him in the future. He says that his dream fight would be to match him up with another one of his clients, Oscar De La Hoya.

Who, just happens to be trained by one Floyd Mayweather Sr. Now, you want to talk about a storyline?

Maybe for Mayweather all the turmoil isn't a thing of the past.

THE UNDERCARD

On that same HBO telecast, leading things off his a featherweight unification tilt between Juan Manuel Marquez and Derrick Gainer.

Marquez, is a fighter that caught my attention immediately the first time I saw him in 1996 against Julio Gervacio at the Anaheim Pond. His poise and ring generalship were reminiscent of another Mexican featherweight Salvador Sanchez.

As he has developed into one of the worlds best 26-pounders he had more and more

difficulties getting his fellow blue-chip feathers to face him. Naseem Hamed, hid behind the WBO to not face Marquez in 1999, and in more recent years countrymen Marco Antonio Barrera and Erik Morales have acted as if he didn't exist.

You could say that he's ducked and dodged so much that he's an honorary black southpaw.

Which is coincidentally what Gainer is. And with Gainers' style, this is not an easy fight for Marquez. But I do expect Marquez to eventually adapt and adjust to the left-handed stylings of Gainer- something he wasn't able to do against Freddy Norwood, in his failed attempt at the WBA crown in 1999- and unify the titles.

Now, if he could only convince a guy like Barrera to give him a shot.