

Contrived Controversy

Written by Steve Kim

Tuesday, 16 September 2003 21:00

Oscar De La Hoya had every right to complain and be bitter about his unanimous decision loss to Shane Mosley this past weekend. Not because he got 'robbed' or anything like that, but because it was a closely contested fight that could have gone either way. It went to Mosley for a second time.

Fighters pour their hearts out into fights and can be very emotional creatures. I have yet to find a fighter, left standing in a hard fought battle who didn't think he won. It's the nature of the beast and completely understandable.

But he had absolutely no right to call into question the integrity of the judges, the commission and threaten to launch an 'investigation' into the matter.

For a guy who says he is trying to 'clean up' the sport, he just poured a bucket of mud all over it, on a night that was supposed to be the shining moment for the game in the year 2003. Instead he basically threw a left hook at the sport and gave it the proverbial 'black eye' that so many of its detractors talk about.

It was a closely contested fight to many at ringside, but Oscar and his people seem to think that it's his birthright to be given every close round and therefore every close fight. Sorry but that aint in the Marquis of Queensbury rules.

If he would have just stated something to the effect that, "It was a good, close fight, I thought I won this fight in my heart and I would like a third fight with Shane Mosley," he would have been applauded for his graciousness in defeat and not that much damage would have been done to his reputation.

But instead he has insisted that the game take an 'eight count' with him because he's a sore loser and now, the game will suffer across the board from it. I talked to a high ranking member of another major promotional company who told me today that as he was out golfing all day, all anyone wanted to know about was this investigation and talk of corruption that was being thrown around by De La Hoya and his promoter Bob Arum.

But De La Hoya doesn't see it that way, in a statement released by him he says that, "The controversy was not caused by my post-fight comments but rather by the fact that millions of people watching the fight from around the world were of a different opinion than the three judges in attendance. Following the fight, I certainly gave Shane Mosley the respect he deserves and I will continue to do so. He is not only a great fighter but as well a first-class guy. I wish him success in the future in or outside the ring."

He then cited some online polls that favored him to win the fight. Yes, fans at home

Contrived Controversy

Written by Steve Kim

Tuesday, 16 September 2003 21:00

who watch the fight on their couch should be the true arbiter of the sport. What is this, American Idol, where the viewers get to choose the winner? Yeah, there's a fair and balanced way of doing this. Sorry but I'd rather have three experienced and highly regarded officials like Duane Ford, Stanley Christodoulou and Anek Hongtongkam-who know what the judging criteria is- rather than fans watching at home with rooting interests. Call me crazy for that.

As for not trying to take anything away from Mosley, well, I hate to say it but I think that's already been accomplished. Because for every story that focuses in on Mosley's win, De La Hoya's allegations have gotten twice as much attention. Remember one thing, these judges were approved by Arum and De La Hoya, they knew ahead of time who they were. Ford, Christodoulou and Hongtongkam have worked plenty of Top Rank shows before with no complaints from Arum.

They were selected by the honorable Marc Ratner, the executive director of the Nevada State Athletic Commission because of their competence and track record. These were no Eugenia Williams' being sneaked in from the backdoor for political reasons.

But I'm wondering, what do guys like Pernell Whitaker and Ike Quartey think of all this commotion? Y'know, it wasn't too long ago that these guys were on the short end of the stick against 'the Golden Boy' in Las Vegas, in bouts that many thought they deserved to get the nod. Where was the cry for investigations then?

And you'd have to think if there was ever a time where Oscar would have gotten far more support for an inquiry or review of a fight would have been his highly controversial bout with Felix Trinidad in 1999. That was a bout that a large majority of observers had for De La Hoya but mysteriously was judged for Trinidad, who juuuuust happened to be promoted by Don King.

But now?

It's interesting to note that while De La Hoya speaks of polls on the internet, he fails to mention that the large majority of the ringside press- those who are not effected by the HBO announcers, PunchStat tabulations and have the best seats in the house- overwhelmingly had Mosley winning or Oscar winning by a small margin. I can tell you from first hand experience being on press row this past Saturday night, there was absolutely no disgust- but mostly agreement- about the decision from the media and when the verdict was announced, I didn't hear any real outrage or protest in the MGM Grand Arena.

The only real surprise is that Mosley was actually able to get a fair shake on a De La Hoya/Arum show in Las Vegas- which is a positive sign for the sport of boxing if you think about it.

Contrived Controversy

Written by Steve Kim

Tuesday, 16 September 2003 21:00

The controversy did not start until Oscar talked of spending his vast resources to get to the bottom of this. Respected boxing scribes like Jon Saraceno of the USA Today and Michael Rosenthal of the LA Daily News, who had De La Hoya winning by small margins, have now spoken out against his actions. The reality is that those who were in support of a De La Hoya decision, are standing firm against his actions.

But do you want to get a feel on how the media really felt about all this? The Los Angeles Times, a paper that can be described as pro-Oscar- all three of their writes, Steve Springer, Bill Plaschke and Randy Harvey scored Mosley the winner by small margins. Plaschke was so dissapointed in Oscar's comments at the post-fight press conference that he referred to him as the 'Golden Baby' in his column.

He closed his statement by saying:" When I formed Golden Boy Promotions last year, I knew that many issues surrounding the sport would need to be addressed. This takes time and patience but I am convinced that if we rally together, we will succeed in giving this great sport it's rightful place. I promise to continue to give my best and work hard for all my fans, the fans of the sport and most importantly the many fighters! After all last Saturday was not that bad, if it was the beginning of the ultimate fight, the fight for a better future of boxing."

How noble, this isn't about him, but for the whole industry of boxing. A sport right now that is facing a bunch of unwarranted questions due to his allegations. Also I have a question, let's say hypothetically, that he has a major attraction down the line as a promoter, who is involved in a huge fight and is the recipient of what could be called a 'house decision' that is unpopular with those ringside and watching at home. Will he then call for another investigation on that show and it's surroundings?

This is about Oscar, not boxing. And once again he has captured it's biggest headlines, even in defeat. But he didn't have to drag the whole sport with him.

PUNCH STAT

One of the things that seems to be influencing the audience at home are the 'CompuBox' numbers that tabulate the punches being thrown by the two combatants.

Well, the fact that it's done by two guys sitting ringide pushing buttons should tell you that it's as every bit as subjective as the scoring. The bottom line is this, it can never accurately depict the effectiveness of the shots being landed and professional boxing is about quality of punches and not quantity.

Plus if you use that as your only barometer to scoring fights, then you know what? Why don't we just great rid of the human element, and replace the ringside judges

Contrived Controversy

Written by Steve Kim

Tuesday, 16 September 2003 21:00

and go the amatuer

route and make scoring a fight a video game?