Written by Michael Woods
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Saturday night marks the first fight of the Social Networking Era of Pugilism. Paulie Malignaggi went to the web after losing to Juan Diaz on Aug. 22 in Houston, in a decision he deemed ludicrous and tainted. He logged on to Facebook, started an official Facebook group, and Tweeted his tail off. The 29-year-old boxer was looking to exert pressure on HBO and Golden Boy Promotions to set up a rematch with Diaz, so he could take another hack at Diaz, without having Gale Van Hoy having a say in the outcome of the clash.

You'll recall that Diaz won a unanimous decision, by scores of 115-113, 116-112, and 118-110, fro Mr Van Hoy, who subsequently admitted he may have had an off night. Most all agreed he did, in a big way, but nobody railed against Van Hoy like Paulie did. After the bout, he blasted the judge, and Golden Boy, and the Texas commission, strongly implying that there was an odious arrangement in place which paved the way for a Diaz win.

On a Monday conference call to hype the rematch, which takes place at the UIC Pavillion in Chicago, a world away from Houston, Paulie (26-3, just 5 KOs) didn't really back off much from his stance that he wuz robbed. He said that Van Hoy likely made a "conscious effort" to award the bout to the 26-year-old Diaz (35-2, 17 KOs), though he didn't repeat any aspersion towards Oscar De La Hoya of Golden Boy, who was on the call, along with Paulie's promoter, Lou DiBella. (Dibella plugged his AA baseball team, the Richmond Flying Squirrels, while phoning in from the baseball winter meetings.)

Bad judging was a constant theme on the call, as all participants agreed that some reform needs to be adopted so the sport isn't beset by so many post-fight calls of "robbery," which was the cry on Saturday, after Dibella fighter Sergio Martinez got the short end of it against Paul Williams. Judge Pierre Benoist wore the Van Hoy mask in AC on Saturday, turning in a surprising 119-110 card, which meant he gave the impressive Martinez a scant one round over the course of twelve tight frames. Two weeks ago, "robbery" was the cry after Joan Guzman escaped Quebec with a draw against Ali Funeka. TSS-EM thought Guzman won the first half of that bout, so he wasn't set off by this call overly. But add them all together, it is clear that reform is needed. And perhaps yearly eyesight exams?

Dibella mentioned that the Promoters Association might push for a change in practice, so promoters are no longer responsible for paying judges for their time and travel. That's a no brainer. A database to log all decisions, so suspicious or egregious decisions can be red flagged and cited easily at regular intervals would also make sense.

"It's a big, big problem," Dibella said. "You had another card that was filled out before or a judge who doesn't know what he's doing (on Saturday, in the Williams-Martinez bout.) It's not fair to either fighter."

Paulie called in from the airport, on his way to ChiTown. He said that he thinks he'll be better this time around. He said that he didn't spar for six weeks before the last bout, and only did

pads and bags because he hurt his ribs.

Before the first bout, he didn't think he'd get a fair shake in Texas, but said that he has no beef with the announced officials: ref Genaro “Geno” Rodriguez of Illinois, and judges Mauro DiFiore of Illinois, Ohio’s Tom Miller and Florida’s Michael Pernick. "This is a neutral site," said the Brooklyner. "Both fighters can benefit. I'm cool, man."

Props go to Diaz for taking the rematch. It's difficult style matchup for him, and he could've said "been there, did that" and targeted someone else. Props also to Oscar, for not taking Paulie's Tweets to heart, and steering away from a rematch. He agreed with Dibella, that the sport needs uniformity in standards and practices for judges on the call. "My problem is how far apart the scoring is," ODLH said.

Writer John Whistler, who works out of San Antonio, got on the line and tried to defend the honor of the Texas commission, and Malignaggi wouldn't hear of it. He said he'd catalogued a b-load of bad decisions in Texas, and deemed the rot systemic. He cited the Feb. 28 draw call in the Chris John-Rocky Juarez bout; Van Hoy saw it 114-114 in a clash that I thought John clearly won. "Let's stop protecting Gale Van Hoy and the Texas commission. Let's not cut corners and make excuses." I'm with Paulie, on Van Hoy and all judges handing in cards on acid. Let's hammer them, and shame them into getting better. Not sure why Whistler felt the need to defend the indefensible here...

Paulie said that he saw one or two things that he'd exploit in the rematch, while Diaz promised to be busier than the New Yorker this time.

The New York-based hitter got what he wanted. He put in the time, energy and effort organizing his peeps to email HBO and Golden Boy, and savvy self-marketers should take notes on his campaign. His promoter said he didn't worry that Paulie's slams and slaps would bite him in the rear, and wreck the prospects for a rematch. ""He's fiery and emotional by nature," Lou said. "I know he didn't mean what he said, out of anger in the moment." I'm pretty sure he did, but Lou wisely played the conciliator in this case.

Saturday, we'll see if all that Facebooking and Tweeting pays off, and Paulie can show the world and that guy named Gale that he was in error in August. And if he wins, may we suggest a new nickname for "The Magic Man." How about Paulie "The Twitter Hitter" Malignaggi?

SPEEDBAG

BURIED LEDE DEPT After I read Richard Schaefer saying that Joe Calzaghe, who retired in February with a 46-0 mark, might unretire and fight Bernard Hopkins, I Facebook messaged friend Joe Calzaghe, and asked him if this was true. "Yes," he wrote back. And then he un-friended me. Not sure why...So I friended his dad-trainer Enzo, and followed up. Haven't heard back. Or been un-friended. I will keep you all apprised...