

SPEEDBAG SPECIAL: On Pavlik, Kirkland, Malignaggi, Duddy

Written by Michael Woods
Monday, 07 December 2009 18:00

Raise your hands please if you are psyched about Kelly Pavlik's Dec. 19 date with "Contender" alum Miguel Espino.

Raise your hands high.

Anyone?

OK, mouths aren't watering at the prospect of Pavlik, the Youngstown, Ohio banger who's been sidelined by a staph infection on his left hand since his February blowout over Marco Antonio Rubio, meeting the relative unknown Espino.

Mouths were watering at the sight of a Pavlik/Paul Williams tangle, which was supposed to go down in the summer, and then again on Dec. 5, but was put off because of Pavlik's stubborn hand.

The boxer's manager Cameron Dunkin was at MSG for the Gamboa/JuanMa Jan. 23 event press conference, and he explained to TSS the deal with the Williams date, and why the WBO/WBC middleweight champion Pavlik (35-1 with 30 KOs) ended up fighting a mere two weeks after he and Williams were slated to butt heads.

"Hey Cameron, TSS readers want to know why Kelly is OK to fight so soon after that squashed Dec. 5 date?" I asked the manager, who is actually in NYC today, showing off a new signing, Mikael Zewski, now the No. 5 world-rated amateur welterweight with a 138-29 amateur record. (A four-time national champion, the Canadian Zewski, 20, was a Silver Medalist at the 2004 youth Pan Am Championships and earned a fifth place finish at the 2009 Senior Worlds in Milan, Italy.)

"This was not what we wanted, but we had to do it," Dunkin explained. "We got heat from the sanctioning body so Todd deBoeuf (of Top Rank) came up with Espino. The doctors said Kelly wouldn't be ready by the fifth."

Even now, Dunkin stresses, Pavlik is not 100%. "I took him to a doctor in Vegas," he said, because the healing wasn't happening in Ohio to his liking. Pavlik's therapy to speed up improvement wasn't progressing, and a visit to a specialist in Vegas has improved the left hand in question. "It's 80%. It may never close all the way. But there's no pain."

Further clarifying, Dunkin said he wanted to buy some more time, and asked HBO to move their date from Dec. 5 to the 19th, but HBO couldn't do it. Pavlik kept waiting for the hand to heal, but eventually he had to fold on the Williams plan. A couple weeks after Dunkin figured out that Dec. 5 simply wasn't feasible, the hand progressed enough to use. The manager said he understands why people are anxious, and makes sure to tell us that he understands totally why Team Williams and HBO did what they had to do. "I understand why the fans feel the way they

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do," Dunkin said.

Espino is from California. The 29-year-old has a 20-2 record with just 9 KOs. He owns an 11-fight win streak, following a 2004 loss to Peter Manfredo, so he'll bring momentum into Youngstown's Beeghly Center.

Dunkin shared some good news. Twenty-five year old junior middleweight James Kirkland will be getting out of jail soon, and will be able to resume his career. The 25-0 Texan, who holds 22 KOs, was incarcerated for violating probation. He was in a vehicle and had a firearm. Cops frowned, handcuffs were produced. Kirkland was sentenced to two years time in September, and Dunkin said he'll be out in five months. Kirkland will stay in a halfway house, and can resume his trek to a title shot. How was institution fare treated him? Dunkin says he's at 173, and ready to begin a re-ascent.

Lastly, Dunkin says his prospect Matt Korobov, an 8-0 Russian-born middleweight, has benefitted from a hookup with trainer Kenny Adams. Dunkin had hooked up Adams up with his guys, like Diego Corrales, Bones Adams, Steve Johnston and Freddie Norwood and all flourished under his direction. "Kenny has to teach Matt how to fight inside, and the first thing they'll iron out is balance," Dunkin said. "Adams is the best trainer in the world, maybe Freddie Roach is there with him. I've said that for ten years."

DISHIN' WITH DAVIS

Kery Davis wasn't fibbin' when he described Sergio Martinez as "Carlos Quintana on Red Bull," was he?

The HBO Sports vice president chatted with TSS last Thursday, at the Gamboa/JuanMa press conference, and we picked his brain for tidbits on what comes next for some on the HBO roster.

He said 25-0 Lucian Bute, the IBF 168 pound champ, wouldn't look out of place as a test for for Long Tall Paul Williams, and mentioned that Bernard Hopkins' name came up as a opponent for LTP before Martinez was settled on. "Hopkins didn't say there was no interest," Davis told us. Who here thinks Williams better get a crash course in footwork before he signed on against Hopkins?

Mind you, this chat went down before we saw that Williams apparently could use some remedial work, so...

"Williams would do Shane Mosley," the executive continued. I like Andre Berto, but am leaning towards Mosley's experience edging him past Berto, so Williams/Mosley would be a great spring fling....

Now, we'll see what happens on Friday, when WBC light heavy champ Jean Pascal (24-1 with 16 KOs) rematches with Adrian Diaconu (26-1 with 15 KOs, dropped crown to Pascal in June tangle), but a Chad Dawson/Pascal fight would pass muster with Davis and his team, he said.

Davis threw a bit of cold water on a potential David Haye-Bernard Hopkins faceoff, terming it

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"unrealistic" for Hopkins. "Hopkins/Dawson, I like that fight," he said. "It would establish who is the best light heavyweight."

Davis was enthused about the return of Cris Arreola, just a little more than two months after Vitali Klitschko showed him that he has some ground to make up before he's an 'A' heavyweight. "The Arreola-Klitschko fight was our largest rating this year, by 20%," he said.

Viewers respond to Arreola's passion and style, Davis said.

The exec said he wasn't worried, as TSS-EM was, that Arreola might disappear after the Vitali loss, and celebrate his nice purse with excessive consumption. "No, I wasn't," Davis said. "I think he learned a lesson on what a pro boxer has to do.

PAULIE AND POUNDAGE Paulie Malignaggi was at the press conference, as he was winding down training for his rematch with Juan Diaz. He looked and sounded confident. His left eye was a tiny bit puffy and bruised but he was pumped that he'll get an extra half pound to play with on the scales. The first fight he had to to make 138 1/2, whereas this time he can weigh 138 or less. "When you weigh in that low weight class, every half pound makes a difference." This time around, he'll actually be able to swallow water, instead of swishing it and spitting it out. Heavy duty business these guys are in, huh?

The Brooklyn resident admitted that before the first fight, he came in a tiny bit worried, because he'd been cut on his left eye in training. "We covered it up for the medical exam," he said. "I knew it was going to open up early in the fight."

We heard from his yesterday that he hadn't sparred because of a rib injury before the first fight. Additionally, he's been promised a 20 foot ring, not an 18 footer like they had in Houston. Does all this intel make you want to bet a few extra chips on Malignaggi, or what?

If he beats Diaz, Malignaggi will target Juan Manuel Marquez, or a rematch with Ricky Hatton, who he swears he can beat with the guidance of new trainer Sharif Younan. Paulie dropped a TKO11 to Hatton Nov. 22, 2008 in England, and that fight stands out to him, and breaks his heart like your first love dumping you for your best friend.

SPEEDBAG John Duddy's advisor Craig Hamilton told TSS that his guy will be fighting 14-3 Juan Astorga, a Mexican Texan, on the Jan. 23 Gamboa/JuanMa undercard. A date with Julio Cesar Chavez Jr was desired but that's in flux, as Junior tested positive for a diuretic following his last fight, a UD over Troy Rowland on the Pacquiao/Cotto card. Look for Duddy to headline at the MSG Theater, against TBD, on St. Paddy's Day.