

No One Is Leaving This Stage Of Negotiations Looking GOLDEN

Written by George Kimball

Wednesday, 30 December 2009 18:00

Early in his political career, the young Lyndon Baines Johnson served as a congressional aide to Rep. Richard Kleberg, the wealthy owner of the King Ranch who was elected to seven consecutive terms in the House of Representatives, at least in part because he often ran unopposed.

One year an upstart rival politician we'll call Joe Bob had the temerity to challenge Kleberg in the Democratic primary, resulting in the convocation of the Texas congressman's staff to plot an election strategy. Several ideas were kicked around before Kleberg himself came up with a brainstorm.

"Why don't we start a rumor that he [copulates with] sheep?" proposed the politician.

This was a bit over the top, even for Lyndon Johnson. The future president leapt to his feet and said, incredulously, "But you know Joe Bob don't [copulate with] sheep!"

"Yeah," replied the congressman, "but watch what happens when the son of a bitch has to stand up and deny it!"

Events of the past week or two have seen the Floyd Mayweather camp adopt a similar tactic with regard to Manny Pacquiao. But if introducing what would appear to be a red-herring issue -- the debate over drug-testing procedures -- to the negotiating process was intended as a negotiating ploy, it would appear for the moment to have backfired. The idea might have been to force Pacquiao to go on the defensive, but Pac-Man instead responded with his stock in trade, the counterpunch -- in this case the multi-million dollar defamation suit he filed against the Mayweathers, pere et fils,, with the U.S. District Court in Las Vegas on Wednesday.

In boxing even more than in life, you never say never, but you'd have to say that Pacquiao-Mayweather is a dead issue right now, at least in its March 13 incarnation. Bob Arum says Pacquiao is prepared to move along to another opponent, and Mayweather is supposedly looking at Matthew Hatton in England.

We'll believe that when we see it, for at least three reasons: (1) There would hardly seem to be enough money in that one to make it worth Floyd's time, (2) He's going to have to put so much into preparing a defense to this lawsuit that he mightn't have time to train and (3) He'd get a better workout if he stayed in Vegas and boxed one of Uncle Roger's girl opponents.

Colleagues on this site have already done a good job of dissecting this process. Ron Borges is absolutely correct in noting that in the midst of all the posturing that's gone on, you'd be a fool to

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accept at face value anything coming out of any of the parties' mouths. And Frank Lotierzo is spot on in noting that if you had absolutely no desire to actually get in the ring with Manny Pacquiao but were still looking to save face, you'd do pretty much exactly what Mayweather has done. Which is to say, talk tough while you get others to run interference with a series of actions seemingly calculated to ensure that the fight doesn't come off.

But left almost unscathed in all of this heretofore has been the convoluted role played by Golden Boy -- by CEO Richard Schaefer, by the company's namesake Oscar the Blogger, GBP's subsidiary enterprise, The Ring, and at least a few of the lap-dogs and lackeys whose favor GPB has cultivated elsewhere in the media.

In late March of 2008, Shane Mosley and Zab Judah appeared at a New York press conference to announce a fight between them in Las Vegas two months later. As it happened, the BALCO trial had gotten underway out in California that week. That day I sat with Judah and his attorney Richard Shinefield as they explained that they intended to ask that both boxers agree to blood testing in the runup to the fight. Citing Mosley's history with BALCO and its products The Cream and The Clear (which Shane claimed Victor Conte had slipped him when he wasn't looking), Shinefield and Zab, noting that Nevada drug tests were limited to urinalysis, proposed that the supplementary tests be administered by the World Anti-Doping Agency.

Want to know what Richard Schaefer's response to that was?

"Whatever tests [the NSAC] wants them to take, we will submit to, but we are not going to do other tests than the Nevada commission requires," said Schaefer. "The fact is, Shane is not a cheater and he does not need to be treated like one."

But the fact is that Mosley had a confirmed history as a cheater. Manny Pacquiao does not. Yet in the absence of a scintilla of evidence or probable cause, less than two years later Schaefer was howling that the very integrity of the sport would be at risk unless Pacquiao submitted to precisely the same sort of testing he had rejected for Mosley.

And you thought it was Arum who was famous for saying "Yeah, but yesterday I was lying. Today I'm telling the truth!"

Schaefer, by the way, defended his 180-degree turnabout by saying he is now better educated on the issue. He couldn't resist aiming a harpoon at the media by adding that many sportswriters "don't know the difference between blood and urine testing."

Don't know how to break this to you, Richard, but sportswriters, who have had to deal with this stuff for the past twenty years, probably know more about drug-testing procedures than any other group you could name.

Now, the reasonable assumption would be that by assuming the role of the point man in this unseemly mess, Schaefer was insulating his boss (De La Hoya) and his fighter (PBF) by

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keeping their fingerprints off it while he made a fool of himself publicly conducting this snide little campaign.

And yes, Money would have stayed out of the line of fire had not a two-month old, expletive-filled rant in which he described the Philippines as the world's foremost producer of performance-enhancing drugs not exploded on the internet at the most inopportune moment. That the lawsuit was filed less than 24 hours after "Floyd Meets the Rugged Man" overtook the Tiger Watch probably wasn't a coincidence.

And we're assuming that this Dan Petrocelli, the lawyer who filed Pacquiao's suit, knows what he's doing, because if there were an even one-zillionth chance that somebody could credibly link Manny to PEDs, then it was a pretty dumb thing to do. You could ask Roger Clemens about that. Clemens' transformation from Hall of Famer-in-waiting to nationwide laughingstock didn't come from the Mitchell Report. It came from his wrongheaded decision to file a lawsuit against Brian McNamee, which in turn threw everything open to the discovery process.

De La Hoya, in the meantime, was playing both sides of the fence. He let Schaefer play Bad Cop as he distanced himself from the negotiating process, but simultaneously was sniping away at Pacquiao from his First Amendment-protected perch as a Ring.com blogger.

"If Pacquiao, the toughest guy on the planet, is afraid of needles and having a few tablespoons of blood drawn from his system, then something is wrong... I'm just saying that now people have to wonder: 'Why doesn't he want to do this?' Why is [blood testing] such a big deal?' wrote Oscar the Blogger. "A lot of eyebrows have been raised. And this is not good."

Ask yourself this: Exactly what caused those eyebrows to be raised, other than the innuendo coming straight from Oscar's company?

Providing De La Hoya with a forum from which to dispense propaganda only begins to illustrate the hopelessly compromised position from which The Ring continues to operate. They might as well give Schaefer a column, too, while they're at it.

Nearly seven months have elapsed since we last visited the Ring/Golden Boy relationship, and at the risk of winding Nigel up, it might be useful here to note that in the midst of last June's discourse, The Ring's editor offered a laundry list of the magazine's covers since the De La Hoya takeover as a demonstration of Golden Boy's restraint.

After listing them, Nigel Collins wrote "that's 28 covers over the course of 21 issues, of which Top Rank had 12 fighters, as opposed to eight for Golden Boy and eight for other promotional entities. Obviously, The Ring has shown no bias to Golden Boy when it comes to magazine covers."

It had never even been suggested that the conflict of interest extended to the magazine playing favorites in choosing its cover subjects, but since Nigel brought it up it is probably worth noting

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now that of those eight covers given over to "other promotional entities," two were of David Haye, whose promoter was properly listed as "Hayemaker," but who had also signed a promotional deal with Golden Boy in May of 2008. (Just last month GBP issued a release in De La Hoya's name in which it described itself as "Golden Boy Promotions, the United States promoter of World Boxing Association Heavyweight World Champion David Haye.")

And even more to the point, in four other issues Nigel Collins offered in evidence the cover subject was Floyd Mayweather (Independent), although what has transpired with regard to the Pacquiao fight doesn't make Money look very independent at all, does it?

We don't regularly keep track of these things, but in making sure we didn't misquote Oscar's Blog we also came across a representation of the January 2010 issue on The Ring's website. The picture on the cover of the Bible of Boxing is of the Golden Boy himself, and the cover story "De La Hoya: The Retirement Interview."

Wow! Now there's a hot topic for crusading journalists.