

A HEAVYWEIGHT IMPLOSION

Written by Charles Jay
Saturday, 13 July 2002 18:00

Considering the kind of commotion we started up in Wisconsin, perhaps a little explanation of my own actions would be in order at this time.

Teddy Atlas pointed out, not only to me but in another interview he had with Steve Kim of MaxBoxing, that if I had spoken to him before writing my story, this entire situation might have been avoided. I understand his point. But there are a couple of other things that need to be understood also --

I'm not necessarily in the business of putting a stop to events that are supposed to take place in the ring. It's not my intention to CREATE news, although that obviously can't be avoided sometimes. My preference is not to alter the material occurrence of events, but to let those events unfold, then react. So I was not predisposed to call Teddy or Cedric Kushner, people I have known for a while, and suggest who they should or shouldn't be engaging in a boxing match with.

As I mentioned in

Chapter 29

, I had been under the assumption that Williams had been taken out as the opponent. I didn't think it was conceivable that CKP would have kept him in there, after the information had been brought forward weeks in advance. When it became apparent to me that Williams might still be in place as Grant's opponent, it was already Tuesday afternoon (July 2), and even then it took at least 24 hours to get any kind of substantive confirmation on it. At that point, I was operating on the assumption that since Williams was indeed in the fight, his participation took place with full knowledge and full disclosure, not to mention everyone's blessing.

Also, as was stated in

Chapter 28

, I felt I had every expectation that Teddy had an awareness about the background of Williams, based on the report he had made for ESPN2 back in August of 2000. He has told me that the story was a couple of years ago, and that he had not made the connection, so I am perfectly willing to take him at his word.

And I didn't have any particular objection to Williams fighting and making a living. I feel that if I were a boxing commission, it would give me pause to approve him, and I certainly wouldn't go out of my way to have him on a card, but I wouldn't go so far as to say that approving him for a show was scandalous. If you need further amplification as to my actual objections, please refer back to

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Chapter 28

. I had tried to contact the Wisconsin commission on Tuesday afternoon, when I started to get the indication that Williams was indeed still in as the opponent for Grant. But I was not calling them to KILL the fight - I never really wanted to kill the fight at any time. In fact, I doubt I would even have informed them about Williams' pending trial, or the charges that were attached to it; once again, I guess I may have been naive about this, but I pre-supposed that everyone was already aware of it. Rather, I was simply trying to confirm that Williams was indeed on record with them as the opponent, so that when I wrote something, I didn't look foolish.

The commission was out of the office until July 9; but when I finally got to speak with Roxanne Peterson, the administrative assistant, who was on hand for the July 5 show, I found her to be most courteous, cooperative, and professional. I really hope she initiates some kind of investigation into the perjurious applications filed by Robert Mittleman and Thomas Williams.

Another matter that deserves mention surrounds the status of Williams, from a boxing perspective, after this fight. In speaking to Roxanne, there was a question as to whether to put Williams on the suspension list or not, since this fight was an exhibition, and will be sent into Fight Fax (the boxing registrar) as such.

I gave her my own opinion - that a stoppage is a stoppage, wherever it happens. If a member of the Wisconsin commission witnessed Williams getting stopped in a sparring session, I would hope they'd want him to serve a medical suspension. So it stands to reason they should suspend him for a TKO loss in an exhibition.

Furthermore, if they DON'T put him on the suspension list, and he goes to another jurisdiction two weeks from now, that commission will check the computer and see that's he's not suspended, and may just allow him to fight. If Williams were to get hurt badly, or worse, under those circumstances, I can't even imagine the depth of the liability the state of Wisconsin might incur in a potential lawsuit.

Enough said there.

I guess I can reconcile myself to empathize with almost everyone involved in this unfortunate situation. I can empathize with Jackie Kallen and Jeanie Miranda, who are in business selling fights to casinos, because they wanted things to go well for their new customer. I can empathize with Cedric Kushner, who got a bunch of lies when he asked Robert Mittleman about Thomas Williams' indictment. I can empathize with Michael Grant's people, who wound up in a position where their main concern was looking out for the welfare and reputation of their fighter, which I suppose is what it should be. I can empathize with the boxing commission, which had probably never encountered a bizarre series of events like this before.

I can empathize with the people from the casino, because I've been in that situation before.

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If I had brought in a promoter, and all this confusion started happening to me on the night of a fight, and someone hadn't explained to me what was happening, WELL IN ADVANCE, I can guarantee you I'd hold back some of the site fee that was going to go to that promoter, and make a resolution never to do business with that entity again. What needs to be understood is that the people in that audience were not boxing fans first; they were CASINO customers first. And those fights represented ENTERTAINMENT for customers.

But the bottom line with just about everybody involved here is that they just didn't do enough homework. If they had performed enough DUE DILIGENCE, none of this would likely have happened. No one can really be excused from that completely.

Can I run a commercial here? If there's a lesson to be learned, it's that they need to be coming to TotalAction.com everyday. Let's face it - if they had, they would have all avoided major embarrassment.

Oh - I forgot about the person I probably empathize with the most here. That's Amy Hayes, the ring announcer who was confronted with the unenviable task of having to entertain the crowd for about two hours while all hell was breaking loose at the venue; while chairs were being thrown into the ring; while a crowd full of casino patrons was getting more and more upset by the minute. Being put in that situation was completely unforeseen for her, and she deserves a double "A" for effort. Craig Searl, the marketing director at the Menominee Casino, says "Without a doubt, she saved the show." I even forgive her for the shameless plugs for FightNews.

One "person" I simply can not empathize with is Robert Mittleman, because of his utter dishonesty that opened the door for all this to happen in the first place. And for other reasons, including the fact that he's completely shameless.

It would not surprise me in the least if Mittleman were to walk into the offices of Cedric Kushner, or Craig Searl, or Jackie Kallen, one of these days and try to peddle Thomas Williams to them again.

I can envision it now.

"He's absolutely perfect. Didn't you see? The crowd LOVED him."

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