

Written by Eric Raskin
Tuesday, 26 July 2011 07:39



The bad news for me: I look like a schmuck for believing Zab Judah could beat Amir Khan. The good news for me: I didn't put any money on the fight and didn't publicly promise to swim the English Channel or walk barefoot to and from Brooklyn or tattoo Judah's name on my neck if my prediction didn't pan out.

Still, I have to answer for my poor judgment, and that means responding to some playful pokes (at both me and Zab) in the miniature mailbag. For the record, this poking comes not from a direct email, but rather from a listener reaction posted on the Ring Theory podcast comment board:

Well, it looks like the stage is set for 2013. That's when we'll see a reborn, revitalized, refocused, and, of course, more mature version of Zab Judah finally be ready at age 35 to give us his best. Some top boxing scribes will listen to his story, watch him spar a few rounds, and will buy into this scenario hook, line, and sinker—and as much as I enjoy Eric's work, Young

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Raskin's pick was like watching a puppy chase a ball into traffic.

As for a supposedly "new" Zab, remember how this was the story back in 2008 before he met Clotey? Or in 2006 when people had him in pound-for-pound lists before losing to Carlos Baldomir? Or back in 2004 when he'd finally exorcized the demons from the Tszyu fight and was ready to realize his full potential? This guy gets more chances at redemption than Lindsay Lohan—and seems to have the same failure rate. Give him a few stoppages against journeymen and a close win or two against a fringe contender and he'll be in with a top fighter within 24 months.

Great performance by Khan who has, with the right people, figured out how to become a world-class boxer with a terminally flawed chin. Kudos. And "bully" to Zab Judah for starting his next journey to realizing more maturity and whatever other intangibles he'll bring to the table the next time he fights and eventually loses to another top flight fighter.

—Chaz

Chaz,

Excellent analogy about the puppy. Yep, I chased that ball into traffic and ended up splattered across an 18-wheeler's front grill. Part of it was because I underestimated Khan a bit; I thought if Marcos Maidana could find that chin, Judah could too, but I overlooked the importance of surviving Khan's formidable offense first. Maidana is a great survivor (as you'd have to be to come back from the bodyslot he took from Khan in the first round). Judah is not a survivor at all. Khan's attack is first-rate, and it prevented Judah from ever mounting one of his own.

Still, I stand by my observation that Judah has matured as a person (and that's not something I said in 2004 or 2006 or 2008). The problem is that he's apparently slowed down enough physically that emotional maturity is of no use at the top level. And Khan definitely represents that top level. Put the 2011 Judah brain in the 2006 Judah body, and he doesn't lose to Baldomir. But against 2011 Khan, it doesn't matter which Judah brain and body you use. He's simply in over his head. Again, full credit to Khan (and Freddie Roach) for shoring up the defense while continuing to grow into more and more of a beast on offense.

In any case, I eagerly await the 2013 Judah revival. Just make sure to bury an invisible fence in the ground and strap an electric shock collar on me so I don't chase that ball into traffic again.

Okay, enough about Khan-Judah. Let's get to the Rants, starting with another surprisingly one-sided fight halfway around the globe:

- It's a shame for Antonio Tarver that Bernard Hopkins is still around at 46, kicking ass and winning legitimate world titles, because otherwise, a 42-year-old Tarver beating the piss out of Danny Green might have gotten more attention. Good for "The Magic Man," who became the biggest star in the cruiserweight division overnight.

RASKIN'S RANTS: Judah Loses, Tarver Cruises, Freitas Chooses, Martinez's Head Oozes

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- From Tarver to another member of the '96 U.S. Olympic team: Normally, I wouldn't say I'm happy to see a guy I like flirting with obesity, but in the case of Fernando Vargas, it's a relief to see him about 50 pounds over his fighting weight again. The comeback is off (at least for now), and that's a good thing.
- You know who else ought to stay retired? Acelino Freitas. If I believed he could come back and do more brawlin' than bawlin', I'd be all for it. But I'm pretty sure a return to the ring for "Popo" would be just another one of those clichéd wet eyes for boxing.
- The highlight of last week's ESPN2 Friday Night Fights: Teddy Atlas calling the Aron Martinez-Joseph Elegele fight and using the phrase "Eleg Elegele." (According to translators who are fluent in the Atlasian dialect, Teddy was trying to say "I like Elegele.")
- The treatment of Martinez's fight-ending gash definitely set the record for most Vaseline I've ever seen applied to a human head. That was like watching a cupcake get iced.
- Vanes Martirosyan has been fairly adamant that Saul Alvarez ought to face him, since Alvarez has a sanctioning body belt and Martirosyan is ranked as "Canelo's" number-one contender. I'll be interested to see how adamant Martirosyan is about these sanctioning bodies enforcing their arbitrary rules now that he's being ordered to face Alfredo Angulo first.
- I don't mean to tell you how to do your job, Dereck Chisora, but maybe coming in 17 pounds above your usual weight for the biggest fight of your career wasn't the smartest possible move.
- Add Kenichi Yamaguchi to the long list of guys who possess more toughness in their little toe than I possess in my entire body. I'd include David Haye on that list also, but, well, you know.
- Just throwing this out there for discussion: Is it time to start mentioning Freddie Roach in discussions of the greatest trainers ever? This might be a topic I handle in more detail at a later date, but for now, I'm curious for my readers' thoughts on whether Roach has already done enough to crack the Mount Rushmore of legendary cornermen.
- The special "Best Of Ring Theory" episode is now live at <http://ringtheory.podbean.com>, and you don't have to be a paid subscriber to listen to it. This show features guest appearances from Jim Lampley, Max Kellerman, Al Bernstein, Nigel Collins, and Rich Marotta, and, importantly, no guest appearances from Ferdie Pacheco.

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