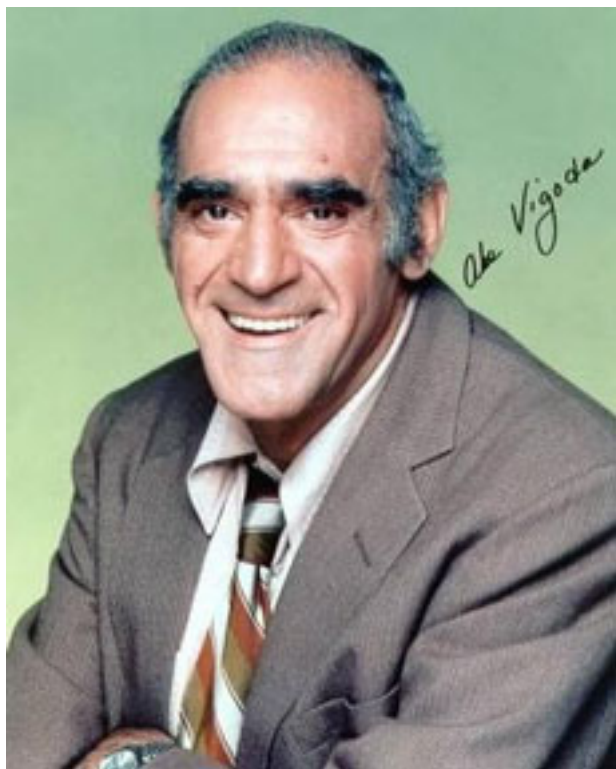


The Vegas Fight Week Experience From A To Z (Part II)

Written by Eric Raskin

Wednesday, 21 September 2011 11:26



We now conclude our two-part exploration of all things Mayweather-Ortiz. If you missed Part I ... well, let your lazy fingers do some work and mouse around TheSweetScience.com's home page until you find it.

N is for Nady

As I watched Jay Nady, once my least favorite ref in the business, working a couple of off-TV undercard fights, I couldn't help but think: through sheer attrition, Nady has risen to a position as only about the fifth-worst referee in the state of Nevada. Clearly he's better than Joe Cortez. And Russell Mora. And Vic Drakulich. And I'll give Jay the benefit of the doubt and say there's probably one more ref out there who isn't very good. Quietly, Nady has reached a point where I shouldn't be upset anymore when he gets major assignments. (Although I still don't understand why the trio of Kenny Bayless, Tony Weeks, and Robert Byrd can't get every big fight. And for the record, I'm pretty sure it doesn't make me racist if I'm grouping all the African-American referees together and saying nice things about them.)

O is for Ortiz

You can't have a "sucker punch" without a "sucker," right? I don't mean to be too harsh on Ortiz—he was fighting as hard as he could, maybe a little too hard when it came time for that blatant, leaping headbutt. But he made an incredibly dumb mistake, backing up from a hug with

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his hands down and his eyes on something other than his opponent. And then he compounded the error (and got himself knocked out) by not taking a hint after Mayweather landed the left hook, keeping his hands at his sides and his eyes on something other than his opponent as Floyd finished him with a straight right hand. You live and learn, I suppose, but I would have liked to see him “learn” sometime between the left hook and the right hand.

P is for Postfight Party

My brother who lives in L.A. drove in on Saturday for the fight, and I figured I'd attempt to show him a good time by seeing if my press pass would gain us access to the party hosted by Ortiz at Studio 54. Somewhat to my surprise, it did. So we got in for free, each enjoyed one outrageously overpriced cocktail, and caught a glimpse of such luminaries as Ortiz (who seemed in damned fine spirits, all things considered), manager Rolando Arrelano, and that “Hoss” dude with the Mohawk. Yes, it was every bit as unimpressive as it sounds. We left after about 15 minutes.

Q is for Quickness

Mayweather still has it, simple as that. Not that anyone realistically expected anything different, but the fact is that, at age 34, we've seen nothing to suggest Mayweather is past his prime. I know Ortiz was made to order to a certain degree and that he was picked as an opponent specifically because Floyd knew it was going to be “easy work,” as he said throughout the buildup to the fight. But you still had to be impressed with the way Money May popped him with lead right hands all night long, nary a nanosecond off the speed at which he used to punch as a junior lightweight.

R is for Roger

The head trainers, Danny Garcia and Roger Mayweather, engaged in a couple of media roundtables on Thursday, and the most interesting moment came when Uncle Roger claimed that Floyd fought with a torn rotator cuff in the first Jose Luis Castillo fight, suffered a few days before the bout. Why have I never heard of this before? (Or have I heard it before and I'm just getting senile?) I'm not saying it isn't true, I'm just saying it's strange to toss out an excuse a decade after the fact. And for what it's worth, Castillo came almost as close to beating Mayweather in the rematch, so unless “Pretty Boy” was fighting through an injury on that night also, I'm not putting too much stock in the torn-rotator-cuff explanation. By the way, you'll never believe this, but Roger spent much of the Q & A promising that a Pacquiao fight will happen if Manny agrees to take the test, and leaning on losses Pacquiao suffered as a flyweight in the '90s as indictments of his ability. On a related note, Michael Jordan was a mediocre basketball player; after all, he couldn't even make his high school team at first.

S is for Sulaiman

Before I had the displeasure of seeing Richard Schaefer everywhere I turned at the MGM Grand, I had the displeasure of spotting Jose Sulaiman wheelchair-ing down the halls as I went to pick up my press credential on Wednesday morning. At least the Prez was sporting a

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hilariously wispy gray moustache. My theory is that he's trying to grow it long enough to cover up his entire body.

T is for Tyson

It was cool to see Mike Tyson hit the media room on Thursday, making his way down radio row. I remember seeing Tyson in Vegas about five years ago and his mere presence completely took over the room—the seas parted, your ears filled with that strange mixture of gasping and humming, and everyone's gaze fixed on him. Things have changed a little bit since. I'm not saying he isn't still a big deal, because he is. But he's become smaller in the physical sense and more human in our perception of him, and he carries himself in a such a non-attention-seeking way that the buzz is quieter. He's still Mike Tyson. But he's not "Holy Crap That's" Mike Tyson anymore. If he's still larger than life, it's only by a little bit. For the most part, he's the same size as life. (Don't think too hard about that sentence, please.) And you know what? I bet he greatly prefers it this way.

U is for Undefeated

Mayweather is not "41-and-1," as Ortiz's supporters chanted at the weigh-in. He's 42-0. Just four more wins and he'll be as great as Joe Calzaghe. (Cue the hate mail from the Mayweather fans.)

V is for Vargas

Whether he deserved to win or not (and it was damned close, either way), Jessie Vargas showed me something by finishing strong when it looked, through about seven or eight rounds, like his legs were ready to give out. But my favorite little Vargas moment is one that occurred a few days before the fight, at the final press conference, when his trainer Robert Alcazar used his limited command of the English language to declare, "Jessie Vargas is better than Jose Lopez, simples as that." If onlys everythings were that simples.

W is for Wayne McCullough

I'd never met "The Pocket Rocket" in person before but had traded countless emails with him and his wife Cheryl, over the years, since I edited Wayne's "Ringside Reports" back in my day as managing editor of The Ring. I bumped into the McCulloughs (and their daughter, Wynona) after the weigh-in on Friday, and enjoyed a warm 15-minute conversation. Wayne is now doing color commentary (he worked an international feed for Saturday's fight) and seems to be doing well for himself. Hopefully well enough that he doesn't get any brave ideas about Morales-McCullough II.

X is for X-cuses

I'm not going to compare excuses (or X-cuses, for that matter) to a certain body part. But I will tell you that Mayweather spent about 10 minutes at the postfight press conference offering excuses for why he hasn't fought Pacquiao yet, and it sure sounded like he was making

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excuses for why he won't be fighting him next. Pacquiao's people have insisted—at least since the failed first round of negotiations, when Manny was not fully conceding to Floyd's demands—that he'll take whatever drug test they want him to take. And still we have to endure Mayweather saying there will be a fight if Pacquiao agrees to “take the test.” Color me confused. I stand by the angle I took on Grantland.com last week, that Pacquiao-Mayweather is a lot more likely to happen if and when Floyd has a loss on his record. As long as he's undefeated, I'm taking the “over” on how long we have to wait.

Y is for Youth

I wanted to take some sort of clear-cut stance, one way or the other, on whether youth was served on Saturday night. But the fact is that it partially was and it partially wasn't. Ortiz, obviously, lost in part because of his youthfulness and inexplicable trust in the sportsmanship of Floyd Mayweather. Youth prevailed in the Alvarez-Gomez fight, but only via premature stoppage and after Alvarez had looked like a very incomplete product for several rounds. Morales beat back the boldness and determination of youth, if only barely. And in Vargas-Lopez, well, the younger man won, though most observers aren't convinced he deserved to. And then, of course, there's Larry Merchant, who's apparently just a fountain of youth away from becoming the pound-for-pound champ.

Z is for Zzzzz

My body clock does not adjust to west coast time very well. Each night that I was in Vegas, I got between four and six hours of sleep before my body started screaming at me to wake up and get to work. I managed to get away from my two-year-old son who acts as the house rooster, and I completely failed to capitalize by getting so much as one decent night's sleep. So, if you don't mind, I'm going to finish this column now and get my ass in bed.

By the way, there will be no Raskin's Rants this week, as I've busied myself with about 3,500 words worth of column already, plus another 13,000 words over on Grantland.com (that monster should run on Wednesday) and two separate Ring Theory podcasts. The Rants, and miniature mailbag, will return next week. Until then, you can occupy yourself staring at this picture of Tommy Morrison (http://www.tulsaworld.com/news/article.aspx?subjectid=12&articleid=20110916_12_0_WICHIT353845), trying to make sense of a world in which we can no longer distinguish “The Duke” from Abe Vigoda.

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Radam G says:

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A is for Awesome, C is for copy. Together it = awesome copy. Holla!