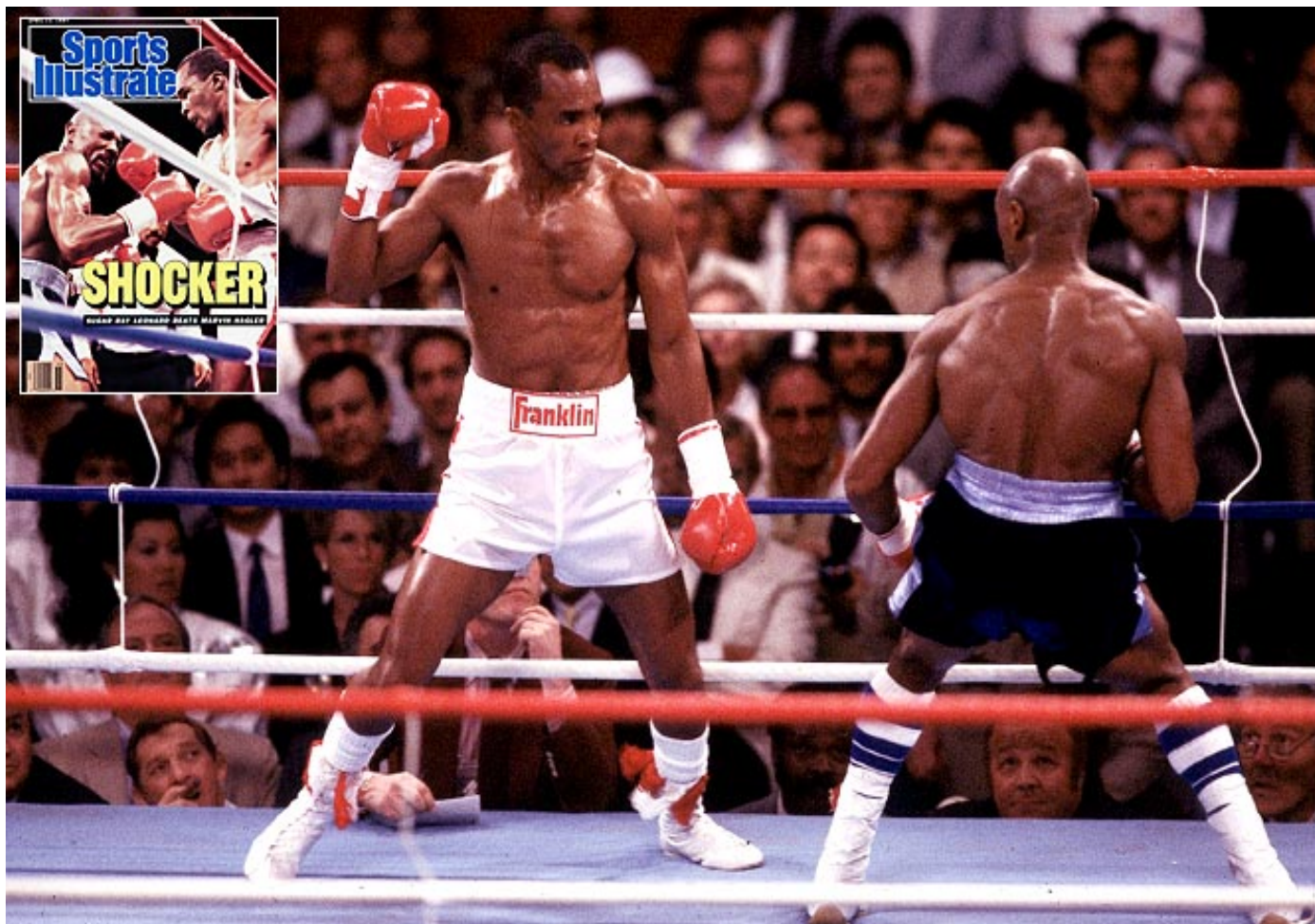


Written by Eric Raskin

Monday, 26 September 2011 07:00

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On last week's subscribers-only Ring Theory podcast, I did something very self-absorbed, initiating a discussion about my Sugar Ray Leonard-Marvelous Marvin Hagler oral history article that ran on Grantland last Thursday. But I refuse to let that moment represent the apex of my self-absorption. I'm going to spin even deeper into a pathetic, humblebraggin' vortex of vanity by making my miniature mailbag section all about the Leonard-Hagler piece as well.

Specifically, I'm going to run a handful of the Facebook comments about the article. I don't actually use Facebook (several years ago I declared that my wife was wasting her life away Facebooking, and now I'm just being stubborn), so my "Rants" column is as good a place as any to respond to the comments. And to temper my self-love just a tad, I'll start with a negative comment (which I'll note, because I really am that vain, was the only negative comment):

Steve Marantz writes: "fabulous writing by eric raskin! he sure knows how to lift quotes from a book. what a writer!"

Two other people I spoke with asked how many of the quotes were from interviews and how

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many came from George Kimball's book, *Four Kings*, so apparently this confused a few people and is worth clearing up: The only quotes in the oral history that were "lifted from a book" were the three quotes attributed to Kimball. (A few weeks before Kimball died, he told me in an email that he wasn't well enough to speak but gave me permission to quote from the book as I saw fit.) Everything else in the oral history came from original interviews I conducted in June and July of this year.

Francois Tourville writes: "This was perhaps the best article I've ever read on sports. On par with Federer - the religious experience."

Obviously, I'm no David Foster Wallace. And no matter how self-absorbed I might be, I must acknowledge that Francois is going way overboard. It just happens that I've chosen to acknowledge it in a public forum where I can repeat his comment for anyone who hasn't seen it.

Frank Minsk writes: "always believed that Marvin Hagler was the greatest fighter ever, pound for pound. He spent his whole career getting avoided and screwed over by the boxing establishment. Reading this article got me fired up again about it, great piece of writing. To this day I believe that they gave Leonard the fight for running not boxing. I gave up on the so called 'sport' of boxing after this fight and have not watched a single fight since. I don't think I missed anything."

Rather than respond to this myself, I'll let fellow Facebook commenter Kent Towers do it, because I absolutely love what he wrote: "Oh, Frank. Buddy, you missed Arturo Gatti's amazing career. You missed Jose Luis Castillo vs. Diego Corrales. My life would be incomplete without the Morales & Barrera wars. Sweet Pea, De La Hoya, Tito Trinidad. Julio Cesar Chavez against Meldrick Taylor. Juan Manuel Marquez and Manny Pacquiao have already fought two instant classics. I live for the NFL, and I know boxing isn't the sport it once was, but the highest highs of an all-time great bout can not be matched by any other sport. I can't rewatch a football game or a baseball game from beginning to end. I'm pretty sure I've seen Castillo-Corales at least 12 times. Tyson-Douglas, oh my lord. Dude, Gatti-Ward I, II & III. I think the 10th round of Gatti-Ward I made my eyes tear up."

And lastly, Colin Horst writes: "Expertly done, and a joy to read. My preference is for aggressors, so I favor Hagler. From that perspective, I must disagree with [Barry] Tompkins: 'I think, unfortunately, his legacy will be the fight with Sugar Ray Leonard.' His legacy is *The War with Hearn*."

It should go without saying that in an oral history, the writer's personal opinions are not supposed to reveal themselves. So when an interview subject says something I disagree with, if it's interesting and adds to the narrative, I'll run it. And that was the case with this quote from Tompkins. I think Tompkins and Horst are both half-correct. Hagler's legacy is many things to hardcore fight fans, but to the general public, it's two fights: KO 3 Hearn and L 12 Leonard. Those are the fights people think of when they hear the name Marvin Hagler—and if anything, I lean toward Horst and say they think of the Hearn fight first. I think both Leonard and Hagler are fairly accurately rated in the annals of history: Hagler as one of the top three or four middleweights ever and one of the top three fighters of the '80s, Leonard as a borderline entry

## RASKIN'S RANTS: Me On Me, Plus Me On Arce, Oscar, Super Six & Other Non-Me Stuff

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into the top 10 of all-time, pound-for-pound. I don't feel either man is particularly overrated or underrated some 25 years later. Both were great, and I'm thrilled to have been given the opportunity by the editors at Grantland to kickstart a new conversation about them.

And with that, I'll stop publicly pleasuring myself and get to the weekly Rants:

Some have labeled Andre Ward suffering a cut in sparring and his fight with Carl Froch getting postponed to be par for the course with the Super Six tournament. I say we need about two more postponements of the finals and then a last-second opponent switch before it's par for the course.

Seriously, though, I'm amped for this fight, whenever it happens. Showtime and Ken Hershman have done something very positive for boxing, and if we have to wait a couple more months to crown a champion, so be it.

Well, Bob Arum and Richard Schaefer getting along was fun while it lasted, huh? Somebody needs to loop Oscar De La Hoya in on what's been going on, since he tweeted on Friday, "Its great to be on good terms with bob arum because the possibilities are endless starting with Canelo vs Chavez at 156." In related news, Oscar is wishing Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez all the best in their lives together.

I'm not quite sure what to make of Jorge Arce's inspired 2011 comeback and impressive revenge win over Simphiwe Nongqayi on Saturday night. But I do know this: I never bet on the guy whose trunks look like a Rubik's Cube.

It's not as if we needed any further proof that Rocky Juarez is one of the unluckiest fighters of his generation, but we got it anyway when he rocked Vicente Escobedo's world with a left hook with exactly one second left in the sixth round on Friday night. If that punch had landed two seconds earlier, I suspect the outcome would have been very different.

In a weekend full of low-profile, high-contact action, the best fight of all was Adam Carrera's six-round win over Adolfo Landeros in the Telefutura opener. I was watching it on DVR the next morning, and it was the kind of fight that I almost wanted to fast-forward when I saw their records (19-4 vs. 21-21-2) because it was a six-rounder between two guys who are going nowhere. I'm glad I didn't press fast-forward. Boxing is a sport that rewards fans when they least expect it.

I thought BoxingChannel.tv's Al Bernstein absolutely nailed it on how the American mainstream media gets their boxing coverage all wrong: <http://boxingchannel.tv/mainstream-us-sports-media-blows-it-again-after-mayweather-ortiz-fight>

. And I'll take it a step farther and say that the Mayweather-Ortiz fight was in no way a letdown. For action, drama, and moments we'll remember and talk about for months or even years to come, it far exceeded expectations. Anyone who wrote that this event was a "black eye for boxing" should (a) ask themselves why they're writing for a living if they insist on communicating in tired clichés rather than original phrases, and (b) stop writing about boxing altogether because they clearly understand nothing about the sport. Mayweather-Ortiz was a bad night for

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boxing the same way Paris Hilton's sex tape was bad for her career.

One last after-the-fact note on Mayweather-Ortiz that I hadn't found another place to mention yet: Danny Garcia told me and other reporters a couple of days before the fight that the final two referees under consideration for the assignment were Joe Cortez and Robert Byrd. I'm picturing Keith Kizer, sitting alone in his office, asking himself, "Hmm, do I go with one my least competent officials, or one of my most competent? I just can't decide. You know what, give me the guy who's ruined every fight he's worked in the last five years!" Deciding between Byrd and Cortez should be like that timeless question asked in Billy Madison: "Who would you rather [sleep with]: Meg Ryan or Jack Nicholson?"

So, fight fans, which of these do you ignore more quickly these days: updates on the chart-climbing status of the Manny Pacquiao-Dan Hill "Sometimes When We Touch" duet, or trash talk from David Haye directed at Vitali Klitschko?

In case you missed the BS Report podcast with guest Brian Kenny last Tuesday, Bill Simmons said at the end to BK, "I know down the road you're going to do some boxing, you can't talk about it yet." You may recall in this space a couple of weeks ago, I predicted that Kenny would get the blow-by-blow gig on the new HBO boxing program due to launch in 2012, and I'm standing by that prediction.

Speaking of podcasts, there was a double dose of Ring Theory last week: the free Grantland Network episode focusing on Mayweather-Ortiz analysis ( <http://espn.go.com/espnradio/play?id=7002623> ) and the subscribers-only edition ( <http://ringtheory.podbean.com> ) in which my broadcast partner Bill Dettloff brilliantly compared someone's head to a "bumpy egg." If you want to know who the bumpy egghead in question is, well, it costs you barely a dollar a show to find out ...

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