

RASKIN'S RANTS: Heavy Thoughts On The Light Heavy Title

Written by Eric Raskin

Monday, 24 October 2011 08:45



When I worked full-time at The Ring magazine's editorial office from September of 1997 through February of 2005, we received a phone call at least once every couple months from someone asking to speak with Bert Sugar. This despite the fact that Bert hadn't worked for The Ring since 1983. Bert only edited the magazine for about five years, but as a talented writer, a renowned historian, a great self-promoter, and a magnetic personality, Sugar made his name is almost as synonymous with The Ring as Nat Fleischer's.

I'm quite well aware that my name does not carry the same enduring weight as Bert's. But somewhat similarly to Sugar, many people have assumed for the last six-plus years that I still worked full-time for The Ring. And over the past six weeks, since my working relationship with the magazine was terminated completely, I've received plenty of tweets and emails from people who are under the mistaken impression that I'm still connected with the magazine. (Perhaps this has a little something to do with the fact that Golden Boy Promotions still hasn't issued a single public statement of any kind about their firing of Nigel Collins and their decision to replace him with Mike Rosenthal and Doug Fischer, the web editors that Golden Boy hired in 2008. Clearly,

RASKIN'S RANTS: Heavy Thoughts On The Light Heavy Title

Written by Eric Raskin

Monday, 24 October 2011 08:45

GBP is bursting with pride and excitement over the changes they've made.)

Last week, after the new guys at The Ring elected not to award their light heavyweight championship to Chad Dawson and instead continued to recognize Bernard Hopkins as the champ pending a ruling on the Hopkins camp's appeal of Dawson's TKO win, quite a few emails and tweets came my way. Some of those who wrote to me were aware that I have no input on The Ring's rankings anymore, while others were unaware. For this week's mailbag (I can't call it a "mini-mailbag" as I usually do, and 1,500 words from now you'll see why), here's an email from the latter category, full of points worth addressing at length after I quickly set the reader straight about my current role:

Hi Eric (and by extension, the Ring Ratings Panel),

I'm not happy about The Ring choosing to withhold its championship belt from Chad Dawson. In past instances where a Ring belt has changed hands on a poor decision, controversy, or questionable call by officials, The Ring has made the case that they can't play arbiter and must uphold the decision rendered by the appointed officials. I recall Nigel Collins himself writing an editorial to this effect a few months ago, though I don't remember the exact circumstances he was referring to.

Since the ownership of the best publication in boxing changed hands, I have not noticed any kind of Golden Boy bias, and I have all the respect in the world for Bernard Hopkins (a true living legend) ... but this decision is puzzling given the lengths the magazine has gone to in the past to uphold the decisions of commission officials, regardless of the opinions expressed by journalists, fans, promoters, or boxers.

I think some of the credibility of the Ring Championship policy has been chipped away by this decision.

Respectfully,
Lucas Petteuzzo
Sault Ste. Marie, ON

Lucas,

I am no longer a contributing editor to The Ring and I am not on The Ring Ratings Panel anymore. Like you, I am just an outside observer now when it comes to ratings decisions. And as a fellow outside observer, I agree with you: This particular circumstance is troubling.

Before I go any further, let me say that it's reasonable for people to think I have an anti-Ring bias or an agenda when I levy criticism toward them. I am still pissed at the way things went down and worried that The Ring name will be dishonored, and I do have a personal relationship with Nigel and many writers who were tossed to the curb last month. But I believe I'm capable of separating personal feelings from professional opinions. And I believe that if Nigel had made

RASKIN'S RANTS: Heavy Thoughts On The Light Heavy Title

Written by Eric Raskin

Monday, 24 October 2011 08:45

this same decision that the new editors made (not that he ever would make this decision, but please just go along with the hypothetical), I would be equally opposed to it.

Here's the big problem with letting Hopkins keep the belt pending the result of the appeal: It sets a dangerous precedent. As we all know, results of boxing matches are appealed every week. Sometimes the appeals have merit (as this one does; I believe the result should be changed to a no-contest and I think it's highly likely that it will be). Sometimes the appeals are a waste of everyone's time. But here's what the new guys at The Ring have done: They've forced themselves to wait out every appeal of every result of a Ring title fight before recognizing the result, or else they'll be guilty of inconsistency. And if they end up treating fighters promoted by Golden Boy differently than fighters not promoted by Golden Boy, then all of the worst fears everyone had when GBP bought The Ring will have come true. (For me, those fears came true about six weeks ago; but everyone else should be willing to wait for bias and corruption to come through on the pages of the magazine and in the rankings before concluding definitively that this venerable publication has been compromised.)

Let's say Amir Khan vs. Zab Judah had been a Ring championship fight. Khan won by knockout, and very few people considered it controversial. But Judah filed a protest. By the precedent set last week, The Ring wouldn't have been able to recognize Golden Boy's own fighter, Khan, as the champion until the protest had been officially denied.

Uncomfortable as it sometimes was, Nigel followed the obvious rule when it came to Ring title fights to always recognize the official decision. When Joel Casamayor won a horrid decision over Jose Armando Santa Cruz in defense of the lightweight title, The Ring had no decision to make; it recognized Casamayor as champ because, officially, he won the fight. Anything else would have turned The Ring championship into a laughingstock.

Rankings decisions are different when there's no Ring title at stake. It's still a bit of a slippery slope to unofficially "overrule" the referee's or judges' decision and rank the "losing" fighter above the "winning" fighter, but such a move is permissible when it comes to all the gray area in ranking fighters. With championship bouts, there is no gray area. It's black and white. The winner gets the title. The loser does not.

In the case of Hopkins vs. Dawson, The Ring's actions should have been simple. Dawson was named the winner by TKO. Dawson is the champion. If and when the result is changed to a no-contest by the California commission, you reverse course and recognize Hopkins as the champion, wiping Dawson's reign from the books. This is so obvious, I can hardly believe I have to spell it out. Then again, I could hardly believe it when I heard about what The Ring editors had done last week.

I shudder to say it, but The Ring is behaving much like an alphabet gang does. Incidentally, the WBC made its own rash decision last week and ignored the fight's official result, declaring the bout a technical draw and returning the title to Hopkins. Congrats to The Ring editors on landing in such esteemed company as Jose Sulaiman. I'm not saying The Ring championship policy as drawn up by Nigel Collins is perfect—I never claimed it to be—but it was near impossible to corrupt and was built on the belief that patience is preferable to kneejerk reactions.

RASKIN'S RANTS: Heavy Thoughts On The Light Heavy Title

Written by Eric Raskin

Monday, 24 October 2011 08:45

Best-case scenario, The Ring's decision to ignore the official result of the Dawson-Hopkins fight came as a result of a lack of patience. Or maybe it's a mix of that and the new editors' egos leading them to want to exert control and put their own stamp on things quickly, trying to distance themselves from whatever was established before they came along. As Tim Starks wrote on the Queensberry Rules blog last week, "I hope this is just a bad call from new leadership still finding its legs."

Worst-case scenario, they're letting themselves be influenced inappropriately. I hope that's not the reality of the situation. I hope nobody at GBP is telling them what to do. But many fans came away last week asking that question. When you make up rules on the fly, and they happen to favor Golden Boy fighters, you'd better be prepared for suspicion from the public.

Since The Ring championship policy began, and particularly since Golden Boy bought the company, I've tried to fend off critics who made the compelling argument, "Sure, I respect Nigel, but why should I go all in recognizing these titles when I know Nigel won't be around forever and we can't predict what will happen when he's gone?" For years, I thought they were wrong and I was right, that The Ring championships were above reproach and would remain so. It turns out they were right and I was wrong, and I'm man enough to admit that. I always assumed Nigel's successor would be someone who would be prepared by Nigel to be the steward of the magazine's editorial department. I never really considered the possibility that there would be a hostile takeover. As a result, I feel like a fool. And to everyone I thought was wrong about the long-term issues with endorsing The Ring championship, I apologize, because it seems you're being proven correct. (Which isn't to say everyone couldn't have endorsed Ring titles short-term, with an option to reevaluate later, but I digress.)

To be clear, this decision by The Ring's new regime to recognize Hopkins as the champ for now in no ways proves there's corruption afoot. All it proves is that the new editors are prone to making short-sighted decisions that fly in the face of how the championship policy is supposed to work. Not that any of this comes as a massive surprise; after decades of Nigel fighting against the alphabet bodies, The Ring's website increasingly seems to serve as a public relations firm for the WBC.

In the end, California will probably overturn the result and the final outcome will be as The Ring believes it to be now: Hopkins is light heavyweight champion. But the difference between right and wrong does not come down only to the end result. It's also about the process. And I believe all of the fans who are questioning that process have reason to be concerned.

Sorry if I was a bit long-winded on that, but it's not a subject that can be properly addressed in just a sentence or two. Now let's transition to subjects that can and will be addressed concisely, with the weekly Rants:

--If indeed a doubleheader featuring Marcos Maidana-Erik Morales II and Antonio DeMarco-Jorge Linares II comes off, those are two hours I will spend not caring one bit about the fact that we're not getting a Manny Pacquiao-Floyd Mayweather fight. You just can't put together a better show than those two rematches for creating new fight fans and reminding old

RASKIN'S RANTS: Heavy Thoughts On The Light Heavy Title

Written by Eric Raskin

Monday, 24 October 2011 08:45

ones why they love this sport.

--I'm not sure what's sadder: that Roy Jones has plans to fight again, or that he takes advice from a guy whose first name is "McGee."

--Speaking of Jones, I enjoyed his line during Saturday night's HBO broadcast, in reference to the opponents he fought in his prime and the opponents Nonito Donaire is fighting now: "We don't rank 'em, we spank 'em."

--I think we can all agree that Omar Narvaez failed to establish himself as the most fearsome Omar in HBO broadcasting history.

--I find the discussion over whether Donaire should move up to 122 pounds or remain at 118 fairly pointless. I honestly don't see anyone in either division who's going to give "The Filipino Flash" a test right now. It's when he climbs to featherweight that I expect things to get interesting.

--In an interview I conducted with Chuck Wepner last week, Wepner noted that the fight that earned him a shot at Muhammad Ali was a knockout over "Terrible" Terry Hinke. This begs the question: Has there ever been a boxer named Terry who didn't have the nickname "Terrible"?

--As you may have noticed on ShoBox on Friday night, ring announcer David Diamante is using the catch phrase "The fight starts now!" If "the fight" in question is the one to convince Diamante to stop trying to force a catch phrase, then I agree, it starts now.

--I don't think Edwin Rodriguez will ever be in the running for any Fighter of the Year awards, but I could see him being in some Fight of the Year candidates. And there's nothing at all wrong with that.

--In case you missed it, last week's episode of Ring Theory (<http://ringtheory.podbean.com>) was loaded with analysis of Hopkins-Dawson, DeMarco-Linares, and Ken Hershman's move to HBO. And of course, there was the surprise guest appearance of Richard Schaefer, which can be heard in this free preview clip:

<http://tinyurl.com/3mc8p63>

. Thanks again for taking the time, Richard.

Eric Raskin can be contacted at RaskinBoxing@yahoo.com. You can follow him on Twitter @EricRaskin and listen to new episodes of his podcast, Ring Theory, at <http://ringtheory.podbean.com>.

[Comment on this article](#)

Radam G says:

RASKIN'S RANTS: Heavy Thoughts On The Light Heavy Title

Written by Eric Raskin

Monday, 24 October 2011 08:45

Boxing will always be boxing. And like a banana -- never straight! The late Tiny Tim told da kid Radam G this. Holla!

brownsugar says:

I thought Rodriguez was going to be the next Tony Ayala,.. how I miss that guy. But after watching him struggle with Pryor Jr and his struggle with his latest fight... I have to lower my expectations.. but there's time to see if he will bloom,.. more to be revealed.