Written by Frank Lotierzo
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On September 8th in Oakland, Ca. two of the best young fighters in professional boxing are going to meet for the WBA and WBC Super middleweight titles. Andre Ward 25-0 (13) will be putting up both of his belts against WBC light heavyweight title holder Chad Dawson 31-1 (17). Ward, 28 and Dawson, 30, are both in the midst of their physical prime and in reality this fight deserves the type of high profile attention that Floyd Mayweather and Manny Pacquiao glean whenever they fight.

Dawson, who sought to fight Ward at the 168 pound limit, must be given all due props. He's fighting Ward in his back yard and at his natural weight. And let's be honest, coming down to 168 from 175 is a disadvantage for Dawson. Because if he was more comfortable and effective fighting at 168, he wouldn't have been fighting as a full fledged light heavyweight for the last six years.

Both Ward and Dawson are terrific technicians who have taken on the best of the best in their respective divisions, and when all the dust settled, it's they who are at the top of the food chain in them. Andre and Chad are both articulate and true professionals. As fighters they're versatile, efficient and very well conditioned. What more could you want from them? Yet their fascinating match up which is being shown free on HBO is barely a blip on the boxing radar. Hopefully that'll change as the fight gets closer and HBO's 24/7 series starts hyping the bout.

Based on the lack of excitement and pageantry pertaining to Ward-Dawson thus far, one is left to believe like in so many other aspects of life, sizzle always sells better than substance and authenticity. Which is of course upside down. If Manny Pacquiao were to sign to fight a rematch with either Timothy Bradley or Miguel Cotto, Ward-Dawson would wrongly be relegated as a semi windup bout.

Think about that, Ward-Dawson represents two outstanding fighter/boxers in their prime facing each other in a bout where the loser is gonna be overshadowed by the other in the foreseeable future, whereas the winner will be regarded as the third best pound for pound fighter in the sport. Yet there's only one legitimate fight out there for both Pacquiao and Mayweather, and that is for them to face each other, but it's not even close to happening.

I mean really, do boxing observers have any doubts about how a Pacquiao versus Bradley or Cotto rematch would go? And is there a morsel of a doubt that Mayweather would school Canelo Alvarez, who has been mentioned as his next opponent, if they fought? However, the boxing establishment and media will bombard us with drivel on Pacquiao and Mayweather's next fight even if it's not against each other, the only fight left for them - and even that is two plus years too late.

Why is that? You better believe a lot of the reason that is, is because that's who and what a majority of boxing fans want to hear about, Mayweather-Pacquiao or Pacquiao-Mayweather. And that's probably because a majority of the boxing media has drumbeaten that into their subconscious mind for two and a half years. It's as if nothing else matters in boxing until

Mayweather and Pacquiao fight.

Another problem for Ward and Dawson is neither talk any kind of smack. It appears they're both dedicated fathers and husbands. Neither of them have said they fought for slave wages or been involved in street altercations or have cut their own CD. They're just simple men who are real fighters and go about their business to the best of their ability everyday.

Ward-Dawson should be a monster attraction just based on how outstanding both fighters are and also because they're both coming off of the most impressive showings of their career. After Mayweather they're the next best American fighters. The problem for them is neither are particularly charismatic and it's doubtful that either could be coaxed into adopting the role as the bad guy just to help promote the fight. And sadly that will end up costing them both some money because today, being a great fighter or ballplayer isn't enough to make the public take an interest in you.

It's better to be disliked and almost despised because it gives fans and pundits a reason to cheer for or against you. But if the most obvious thing about you is that you're nice and do what you are expected to, that's not very exciting and attention grabbing, is it? Sure, if you're already a superstar like Pacquiao, then being nice is a plus, but that's not enough on the way to becoming a potential star and draw.

Unfortunately, there isn't a bad guy participating in Ward-Dawson. Today, two terrific fighters facing each other in their prime isn't enough to stimulate quasi boxing fans. So unless Andre or Chad take a swing at the other during one of the upcoming press conferences, or something is said out of character or defamatory towards one of them, not many outside the shrinking boxing world will even hear about them much less about how their fight turns out.

It's too bad that substance isn't exciting, because on paper, Ward-Dawson is a spectacular matchup. On the down side, the fight could be very tactical and not explode with many fireworks. However, as a fight purist, that's okay. Just seeing them in the ring and battling for technical superiority is enough for me - even if it ends in a virtual stalemate.

Because of the disposition of Andre and Chad, imagining trying to start a fire between them would be like trying to get Joe Louis and Joe Frazier mad at each other if they were to have

met. It just wouldn't happen, and despite the legitimacy of the match up, it wouldn't make for a blockbuster promotion.

For the record - I think a lot of Dawson, but Ward is entering a class shared by only a handful of active fighters.

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Comment on this article

deepwater says:

I know me and all my boxing friends are excited about this fight. $$ on ward. who cares if they talk crap or not . the magic happens in the ring .the other stuff is just noise.

Radam G says:

Ditto deepwater! Holla!

BHarper85 says:

I haven't commented on an article in a while, but this one was 100% on the money, so here I am. If more fights like this one, between two P4Pers in their primes, would've happened over the last few years or so, maybe boxing wouldn't be in its current state of declining popularity. Then again, we've become a reality-TV society where acting like a jackass trumps talent. Mayweather is a case-in-point. I'm sure most people who watch him, whether they love him or hate him (I'm an unabashed hater), don't give a crap about how well he executes the Philly Crab defense, or even know what it is. They watch him because he's an arrogant jackass. It sucks, but it's a fact of life today. By the way, as per Lotierzo, Dawson's really good, but Ward is great. He'll be at the top of the P4P list shortly, and will stay there for a while. Ward by UD.

brownsugar says:

I'm not ready to bite off that biscuit.... all around the web the hardcore are inequivacably voting that this is one of the best confrontations in boxing. better than Ward vs Bute... better than Ward vs Froch II.

It captures the imagination is ways that doesn't depend on an Oral dissertation by either boxer... it just is.

And I'm not alone with the TSS elite also casting their vote that this is a classic confrontation that requires no additoinal hyperbole.

bring it on.

Real Talk says:

It's a part of the movie Scarface I love. It's when Scarface says"the eyes Chico they never lie". Dawson's eyes are saying "help me" Heheheheheeheehee. He doesn't look comfortable from over here. I have a feeling how this one is going down and guess what.....drum roll please.....I'm not saying a word about it ;-) No leaks from me. I'll be on the edge of my seat for this one. Happy B-Day to me!!!! Who's the true Master, guess we'll have to wait and see. SHOW NUFF!!!! LOL!!!! I'm out

Carmine Cas says:

Good point Lotierzo, it is sad that two great fighters of this time are not getting the proper recognition and promotion that they deserve. Perhaps they are too nice too promote the fight or perhaps they "choose" not to sell out and go out of character to sell the fight. Either way this is a great fight for boxing, and it needs more credit. S.O.G. by UD

the Roast says:

This is a good boxing match about to happen. The hardcore fans like all of us here know whats up. The mainstream will miss out. I doubt your average sports fan has ever heard of Dawson or Ward for that matter. Only if the fight turns out to be a wild slugfest (highly unlikely) or if son of Fanman drops in will it make Sportscenter. If Ward and Dawson had built a fanbase on network TV like boxers used to, people might be talking. That stopped happening a long time ago. Oh well, the true fans will watch Ward outbox Dawson much like he did to Froch. Inside, outside. No knockdowns, UD.