

Atlas Still Seething At AIBA's Hijinks, Unimpressed With US Men's Effort

Written by Michael Woods

Thursday, 16 August 2012 13:19



Teddy Atlas worked the Olympics for NBC, and got back from London on Monday. On the phone Wednesday, he sounded a bit tired, understandable with the travel grind he experienced. And, if you are familiar with Atlas, you know he feels things deeply, takes them to heart, and it sounded like the foolishness surrounding the scoring at the Games had him a bit down. But, typical Teddy, once he warmed to the topic, he was like a thoroughbred fighter who looked a bit gassed late, but summoned something from somewhere to rally hard in the championship rounds.

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I asked the Staten Island, New York-based analyst if he saw the American effort at the Games, specifically the men's side, as I did. Teddy, was this a disaster, for the men to go medal-less for the first time ever in a Games?

"Yes," he said, without hesitation. "They need to take a wrecking ball to the men's program, and start with the executives (at USA Boxing). They need to pick the right coaches, and have a team philosophy, and prepare infrastructure properly. They should all be fired. I think some are in patronage jobs, and I don't know if the others don't know enough, or don't care."

We can safely assume Atlas isn't overjoyed with the effort of USA Boxing executive director Anthony Bartkowski. He was quoted in the NY Times as saying that the USA team is hampered by a lack of cash, and thus, the squad had a scant month to train together and absorb a philosophy from a coach that was picked at the 11th and half hour, Basheer Abdullah. "They need to put a proper program in place," said Atlas, who saw how things worked, and more often, didn't work, over three weeks in London. (It was mind boggling to me that coach Joe Zanders was dumped, and Abdullah hired, a month before the Games. Makes sense to me to hire a coach TODAY, and have that guy oversee the formation of a squad between now and 2016. Then again, if the budget is really so woeful, it might be hard to find a quality person who wants a respectable salary, and keep them for four years. Chris Mannix of SI reported that the program got less than half a million of funding for the year before the Games. Now, I am not sure how the funding rises and dips according to how many years it is before the Olympics, but can some smart people not work on getting the funding in place so we can hire an ace, be it an American one, or Cuban guy, or whatever?)

Now, Atlas didn't merely single out some suits here; he took aim at some of the fighters who looked like they didn't want a medal as much as some would assume they would, or as much as they maintained they did on Twitter.

"I want kids on the team that are not just happy to be there," said the analyst, who works mainly for ESPN. "It would be nice see the Americans cry after they lost, like the European kids did, like (Errol) Spence did. It's not a coincidence he did better than most everyone, he showed his emotions."

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Atlas' displeasure didn't stop at the US men; he is no fan of the AIBA, the International Boxing Association, the international governing body of amateur boxing, which late in the Games, bopped Atlas and partner Bob Papa from their front row spot, because they were "distracting." He said he would never do another Olympics if Dr. Ching-Kuo Wu of Chinese Taipei remains President. Atlas said he has never seen an organization in boxing transgress, as a whole, like AIBA did at the Games. He believes that AIBA setting up a professional boxing league, and signing fighters during the Games who will fight in AIBA Pro, which kicks off next year, is a recipe for disaster and conflict of interest. Atlas said that it seems too coincidental that AIBA-signed pros, like Ukrainians Vasyl Lomachenko and Oleksandr Usyk, win gold in a contest overseen by their promoters.

Essentially, AIBA acted as a state commission would, separate from a promoter, at the Games, giving them leeway to influence scoring and thus, who received medals. (Though no evidence of impropriety has been found, to this date.)

You'll recall Magomed Abdulhamidov was knocked down six times by eventual bantamweight bronze medallist Satoshi Shimizu, but was allowed by ref Ishanguly Meretnyyazov to continue, and amazingly, "won" the round on the judges scorecards. That ref was sent home by AIBA, which in my opinion is a woeful under-reaction to a most dubious looking affair. Why wasn't there an investigation conducted immediately? Atlas isn't spouting from the gut, it must be said; the BBC reported last year that Azerbaijan paid millions to the World Series of Boxing, which was put together by AIBA. AIBA denied that a pay to play arrangement was made. Wu called the story and fix allegation "ludicrous." Oh, I almost forgot; what country did Magomed fight for? You guessed it; Azerbaijan. That an investigation hasn't been launched by AIBA certainly doesn't help Wu's defense, now does it?

"What they did to those fighters and the sport is criminal," Atlas said. "They singlehandedly almost destroyed this sport and I don't know if it can be repaired. It's a shame what they've done to the sport, they've deformed the sport, and every ounce of integrity has been taken away. The only integrity left is in the fighters."

About those fighters...I asked Atlas who impressed him from the US crew. Joseph Diaz, Errol Spence and Terrell Gausha, he singled out. He was better able to articulate, though, who he felt didn't measure up, starting with Rau'Shee Warren. Warren, he said, acted in the same fashion in these Games as he did in his previous two tries. "He didn't fight like it meant anything to him,"

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Atlas said. Heavyweight Michael Hunter II didn't leave Atlas enthused; he said he saw that boxer in the gym before competition, walking around with his headphones on, lost in his own zone.

"In his fight, he was out of gas in three rounds," Atlas said. "In the gym with headphones on, what are you doing? You're getting ready for the Olympics with headphones on, what are you doing!?"

Atlas seemed as impressed as I was with gold medal winner Claressa Shields. "She has a great personality, she's strong, fast, is bubbly, innocent, honest." She showed the attributes Atlas would like to see more of in the Olympic boxers. "I'd rather have guys that are less athletic, but care more about repping us and the opportunity, taking it as an honor."

I will share some more of what Atlas suggested can be done to shore up the program, as well as some insights from Emanuel Steward, long a champion of our amateur program, but today someone who illustrates how far the program has fallen, as he admits he barely heard of any of the boxers on the US team. Check back for more later...

[Comment on this article](#)

deepwater says:

ok. atlas is right on about firing every last person in usa boxing down to the damn phone operators. the usa olympic team and alternates need to be picked 2 years b4 the games and thats the team. that said olympic It heavy marcus from staen island trains at atlas's staten island gym. hey teddy, the boxer from your hometown gym quit in the 3rd round against the outback autralian kid. he boxed as a front runner. he came out strong then gave up. dont blame usa boxing or the crooked aiba. blame your fighter and the gym he came out of, your gym. the usa mens team should be ashamed.

deepwater says:

I just boxed my last fight this past weekend. the team from sheepshead bay brooklyn which has all russians and ukranians on it swept the whole damn tournament. I am not easily impressed but these guys came for blood and got blood. they fought measured but ferocious, every punch thrown had bad intentions and their pride showed in the exchanges. respect to the russians who boxed at gleasons(except for the one guy that wrapped his wrist only and not the knuckles, damn usa officals missed it at the inspection . thanks for big truck wayne braitwait for giving me good advice before my bout.

SouthPaul says:

Here's an interesting excerpt taken from a Steve Kim article (Maxboxing)

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OLYMPICS

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Kathy Duva has a very unique perspective on U.S. Olympians and how they develop as pros given that, in 1984, Main Events signed the quartet of Mark Breland, Pernell Whitaker, Evander Holyfield and Meldrick Taylor (who famously made their pro debuts on primetime on ABC a few months after the Summer Games in Los Angeles). Later, this company promoted the likes of Fernando Vargas, who was on the 1996 team. She had these thoughts on a recent article I penned regarding the most recent batch of U.S. Olympians ([\[url\]http://www.maxboxing.com/news/sub-lead/the-drop-off](http://www.maxboxing.com/news/sub-lead/the-drop-off)):

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"I have a couple of comments on that if you want to hear them..."

*

"(1) I haven't seen a single article that notes the fact that what used to be called 'Russia' in the '70s and '80s is now called Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, Azerbaijan, etc., etc.* They fought among themselves in the old USSR and picked one winner to go to the Olympics and face everyone else. Now we have to take on the best that all of those individual countries have to offer and Cuba if we expect to win gold.*It is quite possible that the second-best guy in the old USSR might have given our best amateur boxers a run for their money back in the glory days.*But the second-best guy in the Soviet Union never got the chance to go to the Olympics. Today, there are six or seven strong countries to compete with us for those medals instead of one.*

*

"(2) Our 1984 Olympians - great as they were - did not face the USSR nor did they face Cuba.*While Breland and Whitaker would have won medals in any Olympics, I don't think that anyone could have plausibly expected a gold medal run like the one our '84 team produced, had the Soviets and Cubans been in LA.*I don't think our heavyweights would have won against that competition, to tell you the truth. And a few of the other medal winners would have faced a problem.*For example, I don't know if then-17-year-old Meldrick Taylor would have been able to stand up to the experienced*20-something men who would have represented Cuba and Russia in '84.

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"(3) Our 1976 team was the truly great one.*They won their five gold medals up against the very best in the world.*The '84 team was great too.*I'm not trying to take anything away from them but we wouldn't have exceeded the '76 haul in L.A. had all of the countries participated.

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"(4) Those old ABC 'USA vs. the World' matches didn't just make the participants household names.*Those matches gave our elite amateurs the opportunity to travel all over the world and compete with the same world-class fighters they would later face at the Olympics.*You should ask Mark Breland and Pernell Whitaker how many countries they visited while they were in the amateurs.*Their passports got quite a workout.*There is simply no money to pay for this today.

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"(5) Except for in the heavyweight divisions, I'm not sure I agree that the NFL and NBA are entirely to blame for the lack of talent in boxing.*After all, in which other sport could a guy who weighs around 150 pounds become the most highly paid athlete in the world?*Again, I think that the exposure that the amateurs received on TV in the '70s and '80s made amateur boxing seem

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more glamorous than it is today.*But most important of all, the people who ran the U.S. amateur program at the time knew what they were doing.

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"6) I will not make excuses for USA Boxing because they are dreadful but the people who are running it now had to turn around a program that was literally bankrupt when they took over.*Now that they have put the program on somewhat better financial footing, I hope they can find someone with the will and the skill to make it successful in the future. The women on our team did very well.*They were coached properly and - up against similarly inexperienced competition in the new women's division - two out of our three women won medals.*That's a pretty nice percentage. Our men, on the other hand, must face far more experienced competition and they are simply not prepared for it.*That is not their fault.

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"I don't think our program is as terrible as people are saying.*And I don't think that our fighters stink.*They are, however, woefully inexperienced.*They need seasoning in international competition.*They need to pick the team a lot earlier so that the fighters can prepare.*And we need to be realistic about what is possible in a world where we are up against really talented competitors from numerous countries where boxing remains a major sport.*I guess my point is that the breakup of the Soviet Union did more damage to USA boxing than just about any of the other culprits that keep getting blamed.*And I haven't seen a single article that points this out!"

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Well, Kathy, you just did. Thanks for your input...

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brownsugar says:

This shouldn't come as a major surprise to anyone.

Not since support for amateur boxing has dwindled to it's lowest point in the history of this once proud nation,..... in favor of more politically acceptable sports like gymnastics, soccer,swimming and equestrian events.

A Politician who diverts funds from the few remaining public recreational Centers who provide an amateur boxing program is a politician who'll have a greater chance of keeping his job.

When amateurs can't gain the support of mainstream citizens, how can the U.S. Amateur Boxing program hope to be able to compete with countries who send their potential olympic candidates to sports school before they're old enough to enter the first grade.

This is in stark contrast to athletes who gravitate toward sports like equestrian events, gymnastics, and soccer,..... The participants of these sports will have the necessary community support, personal income level, and private financing to be competitive on an international level. Even if they happen to come from the worst neighborhoods.

Face it. US Amateur Boxing is no longer the Sport of Champions, the Paragon of Excellence, or the Gold Standard it used to be when the 76 and 84 Olympic teams rocked the World.

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Lo'.... how the mighty have fallen.

Around 100 gold medals won by the U.S. and not a single medal won by our once beloved Men's boxing team.

this goes deeper than scoring,.. deeper than amateur style boxing... deeper than poor and biased officiating.

We used to look forward with pride to our boxers like they were symbolic of the might of our once great Nation...

Now it's looked upon as a faded remnant, left over from a savage era.

It's become a sport that misguided political activists would rather sweep under the rug than embrace with the same pride and commitment that they embrace sports like rythmic gymnastics and steeple chasing.

Amateur Boxing has become this nations' orphaned bastard.

With virtually no leadership or father figure emerging to lift it out of the bog...

for the last couple of decades our program has been feeding out of waste cans and from the crumbs that fall from the platinum filligreed tables of the Olympic Elite.

Unless amateur boxing can be Sold to the mainstream on U.S. soil,... continue to expect the same slip-shod, trifling, level of attention and subsequent performance that's becoming more evident year after year....decade after decade.

brownsugar says:

interesting posts. Deep and SouthPaul.

undisputed34 says:

I've trained with basheer Abdullah...he's not a very good coach. He puts more emphasis on conditioning than anything else, which is not bad at all... But knows next to nothing about tactics and developing a fighters natural attributes though.

deepwater says:

[QUOTE=brownsugar;19341]interesting posts. Deep and SouthPaul.[/QUOTE]

thanks man, you too