

Ward-Dawson Is Faceoff Between Young Guns..Why The Negativity?

Written by Michael Woods

Wednesday, 29 August 2012 14:36



TSS Universe, how do you see Ward-Dawson playing out? Will this fight exceed expectations? Will both men see it as an opportunity to get to another level, and perform at peak form? Will it be a cautious chess-match, or will Ward and Dawson show their most aggressive sides, and shout down critics who say that this tussle couldn't excite them less?

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So, let me get this straight. We got the best against the best on Sept. 8, we got the guy I see as No. 2 on the pound for pound list, Andre Ward, against a top-ten pound for pounder, one of the top handful of Americans currently gloving up, Chad Dawson, in their primes, not at a catchweight...and we got people grousing?

We keyboard tappers lobby for more "best fighting the best" bouts, evenly matched scraps pitting the best and the brightest against fellow aces, off pay-per-view...and we've been given that, in Ward-Dawson, and many folks are not down the event...because they don't think the styles will mesh?

My, aren't we picky?

Hey, listen, I'm not here to tell you that I think Ward-Dawson is a frontrunner for 2012 Fight of the Year. I'd bet Mike Bloomberg's change jar contents that it won't be, not unless each man suddenly decides to abandon what got them to this point, the notion that being a superior technician who understands that caution is a useful trait to have if one wants to one day exit the sport with most of your marbles intact.

But HBO and promoters Dan Goossen and Gary Shaw have put together something that we all regularly ask for, and in the Twittersphere I'm reading opinions from any number of "experts" that this one is a stinkbomb.

I won't say I'm surprised; social networks, the ease of transmission of opinions, has fostered an atmosphere where every armchair GM and matchmaker can advertise their acumen and build their follower fanbase. But I guess I am a bit surprised at this level of blowback to the Ward-Dawson tussle.

I reached out to HBO boxing boss Ken Hershman to see if the lack of full-on embrace from the fightwrite media mafia surprised him, or bothered him.

No, is the answer.

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The ex Showtime exec isn't the sort to thunder or bluster or get into a defensive mode. Smart, I'd say, if one wants to maintain a healthy blood pressure, especially in an age where if one chooses one can become consumed with responding to a constant streams of 140 characters-or-less critiques.

Hershman told me that he thinks Ward-Dawson is an HBO fight, a Ken Hershman HBO fight, because "it is two top pound for pound fighters in the world, fighting at 168 pounds, where Dawson has said for years he could make, and I'm not sure who that favors."

So, is it not frustrating to sample the response to the match being made, and learn that more than a couple of the experts have virtually dismissed the scrap the day it was announced?

No, the head of the division said. He told me this fight, as well as the Sergio-Martinez-Julio Cesar Chavez Jr, are co-faves of the events he has spearheaded since he took over the reins at the beginning of the year, following Ross Greenburg's exit. He said he doesn't get caught up much in the negative nelly talk, and prefers to look towards the bounty of fights that can be made riffing off of this main event. If Ward wins, he said he a scrap against a Mikkel Kessler or a Kelly Pavlik would be intriguing. A Dawson win would mean the Connecticut fighter could stick at 168 after a signature win, and maybe do a rematch, or head back up to 175, where a Jean Pascal rematch, or a Tavoris Cloud bout beckons. Basically, Hershman wouldn't take my bait when I offered the "aren't know it alls on Twitter annoying" ball on a T. He preferred to point out that for those not as keen on the sweet science element of the sport, they should be satisfied with the Antonio DeMarco-John Molina lightweight title scrap, from the Ward undercard, which he thinks should have the "take one-to give one" feel to it. Also, Hershman noted that if anyone feels left out still, some action from the marquee division, the heavyweights, could cheer them up. Vitali Klitschko will meet unknown Manuel Charr, in what could be his final fight before he enters the political realm full-time. "So you have something for everyone," Hershman said. Also, he pointed ahead, to the Brandon Rios-Mike Alvarado tiff on Oct. 13, as a bone for those that point to Ward-Gatti I as their all-time fight of the year.

HBO does like to identify and spotlight the top-grade talents, and nurture them. Some opiners would rather they went for a more a la carte approach, snagging compelling fights, rather than snagging athletes, and then finding them foils. I see the validity of both avenues, as from a business perspective, one sees how it doesn't make sense to introduce an athlete to the public, build them up, and then hand that athlete to another broadcast entity, to reap the rewards of the buildup. And on the other side, us fans simply want to see the matches that make the most

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sense, and don't care as much about the longterm story arc of a boxer. I confess I am curious to see how the Ward arc plays out. Because he is something of a hard sell as a personality; the SOG brand isn't one that lends itself to be written about, because, frankly, there is a predictability to his message that while admirable, can be less than compelling. When he talks about his faith being important to him, and it being paramount that he represent his faith and God as he sees him, there is an absence of drama...and writers like and seek out drama. And if Ward were the sort who looks to remove heads from shoulders, purely predatory, then there would be a message dissonance that would demand attention. But he is smart tactician, who doesn't allow you to do what you do best, and then uses angles and intelligent combos to rack up points on you. All in all, I wonder, does Ward's solidity as a citizen, and the absence of drama he leaves in his wake, subconsciously cause some of us writers to bury his brilliance? For that matter, I wonder, if Dawson fought the same way, but helped us writers churn out copy with marvelously malevolent trash talk, and had a knack for incendiary Tweets, would he not be a more marketable draw? Would this match have drawn the early criticism it did if both men fought exactly the same way, but had personalities that made our jobs easier?

So anyway, I wondered, is Ward an athlete born at a bad time, a good guy campaigning in an era where bad boys draw the most press, and loot? "I don't think so," Hershman said. "Andre Ward is a family man, a devoted athlete, and I think he and Dawson appreciate that this is an opportunity to make their stamp," said Hershman, who clearly hasn't given in to the pop culture tendency to be magnetized to the hot mess, the TMZ perennial. Hershman said he won't press to fill a moral vacuum, try to shove Ward down peoples' throats as a role model for the youth. "I will leave those decisions to parents and others," he said.

I suspect that Ward-Dawson could surprise to the upside, that one or both men could shift tactics away from being a skilled neutralizer, and that the low or moderate expectations of many could be bettered. I asked Hershman if in this atmosphere where fight buyers and promoters are looking for more aggressive combatants, and aren't as likely to utilize a patient counterpuncher type, especially one who has below average power, he doesn't consider approaching fighters, a la UFC's Dana White, and recommending that they take things out of the hand of the judges. (Who, must I remind you, have a recent track record that is somewhere between mercurial and disgraceful.) Again, showing a temperance which indicates that the man simply stays in his lane, and doesn't try to over-reach and over-leverage himself, Hershman said no, that is not his way. He appreciates the technical wizardry that a Ward and Dawson bring to the table, and wouldn't think to try and diminish that. (Good news, I'd say, if you rising talent who doesn't own bricks for hands, and wants a coveted HBO slot.)

Hey, I love the Twitter, I appreciate writers who aren't afraid to make their opinion known, ruffle some feathers. Indeed, if Ward and Dawson light up a stinkbomb on Sept. 8, I will be out and about, critiquing myself. And, if the fight bombs, you are welcome to hammer me with "I told ya

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SOS."

But, I say, let's see how the fight plays out, and moving forward, perhaps we should consider less "contempt prior to investigation" and embrace more of a "let's wait and see how it plays out" stance.

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deepwater says:

I dont see any negativity at all with this fight. all my boxing buddies are looking forward to this fight and the bookies have it right when they posted ward as 3-1 fav. I would say that if people arent excited about this fight is because bad chad doesnt pull the trigger and go for the kill. he is good and uses his style to win but unless you like klitchos style of prevent boxing(hey mort) then most fans feel under excited when watching chad. ward may not have the best skills but the chip on his shoulder makes him fun to watch. he has bad intentions and goes for the kill. klitcho should study bloomberg if he wants to go into politics. nanny bloomberg only takes \$1 a year salary and he seized his 3rd term illegally. what is bloombergs agenda? he wants to ban big sodas because the little people are too stupid to eat right; yet in same speech he says go to nathens hot dog eating contest. what the?.. when bloombeg gets to hot dog eating contest he hates the people so much he starts cursing at them in his speech. what is bloombergs agenda and who does he represent? klitcho can learn alot about supressing the will of the people and illegally seizing power just like other eastern european leaders in the past.

ali says:

Dawson vs Ward is a terrific fight but dumb *** boxing fans how don't know sh*t about boxing think it's going to be a boring fight. Fighters with this kind of skill set is the reason why they call boxing the sweet science. Dawson is a straight up G for taking this fight at 168 and in Ward hometown. Ward is also he came off a tough super six tournament were he broke his hand and what does he do takes a fight against the top dog at 175. wow!!!! There should be absolutely no negativity about this fight. Im looking forward to this fight alot more the Martinez vs Chavez Jr and I don't have to pay 60 bucks to see it.

amayseng says:

this is a fantastic fight and even if it does come off a bit boring or more technical then you still cant complain when two best of their division fight each other.

finally a couple good fights on the way, very exciting for us fans

i favor ward in this fight but no matter who loses the loser has nothing to be ashamed of.

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Buzz Murdock says:

It's all about the weight. If Ward had come up in weight (via ray robinson against joey maxim) it might've been interesting. But a solid professional athlete losing 7 pounds of muscle is gonna be drained. Ward has all the advantages, home-field, and catch weight

I've never heard of a solid champion coming down in weight, Ward could've made 175 alot easier than dawson dropping down to 168...that's insane... I'm kinda dissapointed that a fighter as great as Ward didn't play this competition a little straighter.....again it's all about the weight.

Radam G says:

No! It would not have been any different if da SOG had come up in weight. He has a history of whuppin' BIG @sses. The cat won the O-Games's light heavyweight gold, while he was barely a middleweight. How many boxers go down in weight after dominating at a heavier weight? About five cats that I can think of off the top of my noggin. Holla!

ali says:

Murdock Chad says he eats stake and potatoes, pretty much whatever he wants and make weight at light heavyweight with ease. The only thing he has to do now is diet not starve his self and I believe him. Ward thinks that making him fight at 168 was going to drain him but I believe he has miss calculated. Im a big fan of both fighters but Chad is about to prove the odds makers wrong.

Radam G says:

SuperChad is full of shyt. Of course he can play the SCLA Alis of the Universe. Steak and potatos are for __ __ __, not world-class boxers. Holla!

MisterLee says:

Can't wait! I called Ward Dawson BEFORE the super six pple! HOLLer! It did happen sooner than i thought. Pc!

Shoulder Roll Defense says:

Chad will be ok if he boxes and doesn't get into a dog fight with Ward. He is naturally the bigger and better athlete and needs to fight that way. Does anybody know what the betting odds are on this fight? I might have to put some money on Chad, don't sleep on this brother. My official pick is Chad Dawson by split decision, holla!

Radam G says:

SuperBad Chad is gonna shoulder roll into a serious beatdown in Oak-Town. SOG is gonna beat da hebejeebeez outta him and the peepee. SBC does not get that being six-foot-one is bunk for shoulder rolling and bending and leaning down to four-foot-ten. He will be too small

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and off balance to mess with the SOG. Thunderbolt punches are gonna crack SBC's eyelids wide opening. Dude has been cut da double fudge up in about four of his last bouts.

His skin is probably weak from doing da nasty while in training. Blood lost through sex is just as bad as if you cut yourself with a razor.

At this stage, the bookies are favoring SOG three hundred to win one hundred. But it will probably shoot up after those in da know see SBC's face skin is dried out and sagging. SOG is going to cut his arse up badly. Holla!

Buzz Murdock says:

To reiterate about the weight thang---Cotto drained against Pacquiao--competitive in the early rounds, but turned in pulp later, same story with Margarito. Glen Johnson never was the same once he went back to 168, ditto Roy Jones Jr.. and then James Toney's lifeless last performance at Cruiserweight after a huge weight loss...Chavez suffering leg cramps trying to rehydrate...no my friends the cards are stacked in Ward's favor---he didn't walk that ray robinson bridge...it'll be the weight, and the oddmakers know it.

Radam G says:

It will be skill and will. The experts know it. It has always been that way. Holla!

Radam G says:

Ward will one day walk that bridge that many middleweights have walked. They went up and won the light heavyweight title belt. There are many types of greats. Sugar Ray Robinson was a smaller cat, who could not wear the jockstraps of Fritzsimmom, Dick Tiger, Sugar Ray Leonard, Tommy Hearn, James Toney and Roy Jones Jr, to name a few in moving up pass middleweight.

Double fudge SRR's bridge pass middleweight. He did not do JACK pass that! Holla!

Buzz Murdock says:

I guess knocking out a prime gene fullmer with one punch ain't jack. changing the face of boxing (just ask mohammed ali who emulated him),being interviewed by Edward R. Murrow on Person to Person, fighting a small but dynamic Carmen Basilio in two thrillers, and carrying boxing on his back for 20 years isn't much of an accomplishment.

Sorry my friend Ward's playing the percentages in this fight, you know it, and i know it.

By the way in your list of fighters who were greater than Robinson, you named SUGAR RAY Leonard (who i agree was a stellar pugilist), but come-on man where do you think he got his name from. Certain guys are BRIDGES to the future.

No need to slander them.

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It just takes one punch. A nobody kayoed "HOMICIDE" Hank Armstrong with a single punch early in that great's pound for pound career. It didn't mean jack.

Fulmer's record against SRR was two wins, one lost and a gift draw for SRR. SRR was a P4P great. He didn't match those that I named. Deal with it. There is no need for reality distortion. Actuality history is just that.

Sugar Ray Leonard and a lot of middleweights won what SRR didn't get -- a light heavyweight and/or heavier weight titles. Shade and shadows don't block out ___ __ ___! Holla!

Radam G says:

Just so you will know! Ray Leonard was name after his distant blind cousin. No less than Ray Charles Robinson, better known as the late, great singer Ray Charles. Besides, it is generic and in fashion for African-Americans to take the nickname "Sugar," if their first names is a form that has Ray in it. That is how the game rolls. Holla!

Buzz Murdock says:

History is reality's distortion...nice---you've probably seen the hbo biography on Robinson with the Miles Davis soundtrack---I can't really imagine (with all due respect)--James Toney, Sugar Ray Leonard, or Tommy Hearns's narrative having any of that jazz drama.

Hearns unconscious on the ropes against Iran Barkley, Sugar Ray Leonard winning a tittle against Donny La Londe (who could only fight with one arm) still knocking Leonard down, and James Toney masochistically out of shape are not poses I Remember Ray Robinson taking.

Fullmer was in his prime when Robinson knocked him out (I don't think he'd ever been floored up to that point), and Fullmer got the gift in the draw with Robinson as Rocky Marciano would say, I sawr it".

Last but not least we have the noble Dick Tiger losing to an over the hill Joey Giardello, and flattened like a pancake by Bob Foster.

There will always be an asterisk by the Ward vs Dawson contest.And that's just a fact jack.

Radam G says:

Play that reality distortion until ___ __ ___! And media manipulation. Cover up reality, but you cannot change it. It's nonperishable solid rock. SRR didn't do shyt above being a middleweight. He's all that and a bag of chips. But with lemonade and a peanut butter sandwich he ain't. Holla!

amayseng says:

well too bad they didnt just agree on 168-175lbs just to erase all debate... big ward fan and big fan of sbc for taking the fight and the challenge...no losers in this fight no matter what happens much respect to both.