Written by Michael Woods
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Happy faces on this April night when Dawson (left) and Scully (right) celebrated after beating Hopkins. After a loss to Ward on Sept. 8, there is less smiling.

Trainer John Scully wanted to make certain that he gave ample due to Andre Ward after Ward neutralized and then steamrolled his guy, Chad Dawson, on Saturday night in Oakland. But in hours and days following Dawson's TKO10 loss, Scully also wanted to stand up for himself, and point out that when a fighter wins, the fighter gets the bulk of the credit. But when he loses, as when Manny Pacquiao and Amir Khan did in the last couple months, much negative focus is applied to the trainer.

"We win and we lose as a team first and foremost," Scully told me,"but by the same token, when the fight is over the trainer and the fighter get the blame, the team doesn't get the blame."

"The team" that Scully refers to, on this occasion, is him, Dawson and strength and conditioning coach Axel Murillo, a Louisiana resident who has worked with Dawson for about six years, and was in charge of getting the Connecticut boxer to the super middleweight limit, from the light heavyweight limit.

Dawson, a top twenty pound for pound guy, who had lost just once since turning pro in 2001, landed a scant 29 punches in nine plus rounds in Oakland, a shocking and woeful stat. That in mind, I asked Scully what happened, and if weight drain was a major factor, because even if Ward is No. 2 or even No. 1 pound for pound, the 30-year-old Dawson landing less than three punches a round indicates something was off for him on Sept. 8.

"Unbelievably," Scully said.

And when did he know that Dawson(31-2) would be compromised by going down to 168, for the first time since 2006?

"A couple weeks ago," said the trainer, who fought as a pro from 1988-2001, and left a 38-11 record.

"The strategy to lose the weight I wasn't directly involved in," Scully said. And yes, he didn't care for the manner in which it was done, under the guidance of Murillo. Scully said that Dawson started camp nine weeks out at 182 pounds. After four weeks, which he said featured a lot of

running, as much as five miles a day, as much as six days a week, he said Dawson was 181 pounds, far off the 168 pound limit. "I had a discussion (with Murillo)," he said, "and asked how come he's not losing the weight, and he shut me down. He said I didn't know what I was talking about... but I know how to read scales."

So, was Dawson sneaking off to his room at night, and ordering room service, or something? No, Scully said, all his meals were monitored.

Here, he took the opportunity to again express to me that he was speaking up about this issue not to be a sour graper, but because this is his vocation. "This can affect my ability to get future work," he said. "This is my livelihood."

The night before the Sept. 7 weigh-in, Scully said that Dawson was 175 pounds, and needed to run 55 minutes on a treadmill, and also sit in a sauna for 20 minutes to hit 168. "That's not right," he said. "There was no chance to rest and recoup before the fight." To his understanding, Dawson ate and drank nothing the night before the weigh, and the day of the weigh in, until after he stepped on the scale.

So, was Dawson admitting in confidence that the weight drain was hurting him in camp? No, Scully said, fighters never verbalize that issue. They think if they vocalize that everything is going well, then it will be so. "They won't admit it to anyone ever. EVER," he said, for emphasis. "If he doesn't verbalize it, it's not real. It becomes real when he says it."

One takeaway I definitely want readers to take away from this piece: a reminder, or the comprehension, that making weight is a hellish ordeal, oftentimes, for a boxer. "It's the worst thing known to man," Scully said. "It's brutal mentally. A guy will look great, but fighters aren't stupid. They know...and if they don't know, they'll know when the fight starts.

"I depleted myself numerous times, it's one of the thing I don't miss about being a fighter. It was the worst time of my life. So I knew what Chad was going through. It's one of the times me being fighter means something."

I reached out to strength and conditioning guru Murillo to get his side.

He maintains that the weight cut went according to plan, and that Scully lacks the knowledge of Murillo's world to know the proper methods to cut weight.

So, was the weight cut done improperly?

"That's incorrect," Murillo told me. "Scully was with us for an hour or an hour and a half a day, that was it. He never saw what Chad was eating, drinking, the supplements. I purposefully over-hydrated Chad the week of fight, so he didn't have to dry out, so that wouldn't be an issue."

He said Dawson was 174 the day before weigh in, and that was no red flag. The Mackie Shillstone-disciple said Dawson did on Sept. 6 do some work on the treadmill, 40 minutes, but some of that was walking, and that he did 15 minutes in the sauna. "Scully doesn't understand heart rate," he said to point out that he thinks Scully still adheres to an "old school" mindset when it comes to cutting weight. Dawson, Murillo said, didn't have to do anything to cut weight the day of the weigh-in, which is a pretty common practice in he sport, and you didn't see him spitting in a cup to drop an ounce or two, or licking his lips, which is evidence of dehydration.

Murillo said that during camp, and in the fight, Dawson was never cramping, and that the weight drain wasn't the primary reason for the loss. "Chad spoke to me after, said it wasn't the weight, he said Ward was just faster, that he didn't use the jab, didn't go to the body, that Andre did his gameplan and we didn't do ours," Murillo said. "I think we got outwitted by a faster guy." Further, he says that Chad, who he believes is better suited to fight at 175, ate a grapefruit the night before the weigh in, so in fact, he was processing some calories on Thursday. "Chad is fast but at 168, these guys are faster," Murillo said. He thinks he and Chad will still work together moving forward.

My take: I think Dawson is, as Murillo said, best suited to fight at light heavyweight. This is a guy with minimal fat to slice off. He has to cut into muscle, in my inexpert opinion, to get to 168, and that is bound to sap his energy, almost no matter how he cut the weight. He experimented, he made more than a half million dollars as a lure to conduct the experiment, and now he knows this: he's more alive at 175.

Comment on this article

deepwater says:

sell that b.s. somewhere else. the team knew a few weeks b4 the fight about the weight loss? meanwhile all we heard out or team dawson was he feels great, he is natural 168 and thats where he gets knockouts, excuses exuses,blah,blh,blah. I expect alot better from scully. either a bunch of liars,hypocrits,con artists who only con themselves,or just ignorant. this team is disentigrating right before our eyes, chad only has 2 or so fights left.

Radam G says:

Ditto Deepwater! I'm with him in drowning those phony, fibbing, sorry, lying, romanticizing __ ___ ___ in doze metaphoric deep waters. Those muthasuckas cannot swim. Dodging the oceans of reality, they'll always come up with some bullshyt blatant trim.

Mudhole jokers were fantasizing from the JUMP! And SOG called their fantasy, and fried a dead man walking. Whup his RUMP!!! Hehehe! Holla!

brownsugar says:

[QUOTE=deepwater;19825]sell that b.s. somewhere else. the team knew a few weeks b4 the fight about the weight loss? meanwhile all we heard out or team dawson was he feels great, he is natural 168 and thats where he gets knockouts, excuses exuses,blah,blh,blah. I expect alot better from scully. either a bunch of liars,hypocrits,con artists who only con themselves,or just ignorant. this team is disentigrating right before our eyes, chad only has 2 or so fights left.[/QUOTE]

Well Said,..

let's not forget that Dawson challenged Bute and Froch too at 168 near the end of the tournament and also after the winner was crowned.

Dawson was pursuing the fame and limelight those guys had accrued in the public eye up until that point to bolster his ailing career.

Being a good fighter,.... but also seemingly unable to draw any significant interest from the public, Dawson extended himself by offering to fight the higher profile supersix contestants at 168 publically, on the internet more often than I can count.
Dawson was back with his busom buddy and Life-Partner-Trainer (Scully)and life was beautiful again.
Dawson and Scully proclaimed he was destined to return to better days..

Ward didn't pursue Dawson with endless cash and demands to cut weight.

Dawson pursued Ward, and made an offer neither HBO or Ward could refuses. (he wanted the deal so bad he accepted a paltry $600-000 to fight Ward, when Berto got paid a flat million to fight virtual unknown Freddie Hernandez)

It's clear the deal wasn't fully realized to it's fullest potential nor did Dawson test the water before he plunged in head first.

But everything was good and acceptable on Dawsons side... no problemo.... (yeah right)

The best thing Team Dawson can do right now to retain any respect and remaining credibility is to lick their wounds privately and prove what Dawson is capable of in his next outing,.. not how much of a stink they can raise through the media. "Suck it UP".

This is reminiscent of the beginning of the meltdown between Pavlik and Jack Loew.

Buzz Murdock says:

Dawson looked like he had a shrunken head on his neck. He did not look like the same fighter that fought Pascal, Hopkins, or Tarver. The fact that his team took the money, and lost, embarrassing their fighter by making him say "enough" instead of stopping the fight, only adds insult to injury. Time has a funny way of changing me/I used to be someone different in my memory, must have run through Bad Chad's mind as he tried to fight on empty.

ICEMAN JOHN SCULLY says:

Hmmm...so what should I do? Should I post the truth and completely wreck everything this guy said against me?????

Radam G says:

C'mon Iceman, don't DEEP freeze the house. You know how da hurt bitnezz game roll. Somebody's arse has to be bit off when you lose. But they don't even lick your arse when you win. Fanfaronades and groupies are what they are. Hehehe! And you kno' dat! Holla!