Written by Kelsey McCarson
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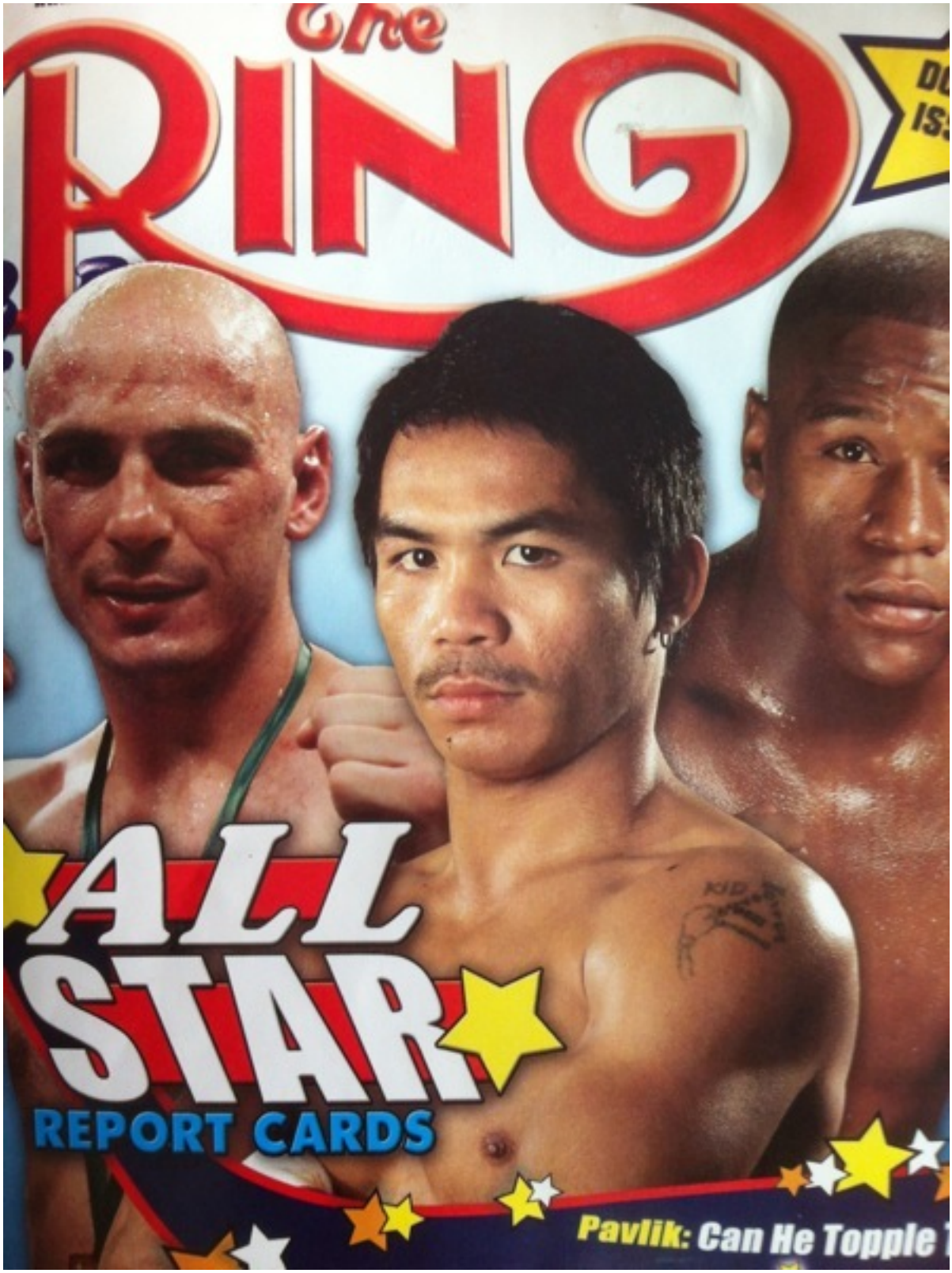

Part two of this TSS special will focus on the second ten fighters listed in Gavin Evans' Ring Magazine article from exactly five years ago this month, the 2007 All Star Report Card, an article intended to grade the very elite of the sport and forecast where their careers might be headed. Let's continue to have a look at who those folks were then versus whom they turned

out to be.

Shane Mosley was riding a renewed sense of vigor in his career. Having won “just one out of six between ’01 and ’05, Mosley [had] returned to form, with five straight victories – in increasingly impressive style.” The steak would stop at five that very year, when Mosley lost a spirited decision in November against the then-still-undefeated Miguel Cotto. Evans calls Mosley “one of the outstanding lightweights of the modern era – unbeaten at the weight” while also being fairly critical of his association with “the notorious Balco organization, a supplier of illegal, performance enhancing drugs to various athletes”. Of course, one of those athletes turned out to be Mosley, who subsequently confessed to taking PEDs before his 2003 fight against Oscar De La Hoya. Still, Mosley is most assuredly heading for the International Boxing Hall of Fame once he becomes eligible. Both then and now, Mosley is a “popular and highly respected figure” despite his inability to ever become as golden of a goose as his rival/brief business partner, Oscar De La Hoya. Mosley retired just this year after being winless in his last four fights, one of them a draw against Sergio Mora.

Puerto Rican superstar **Miguel Cotto** was undefeated through twenty-nine professional fights in 2007. Evans notes Cotto as being a “heavy-handed boxer” who uses a “cool, unflustered approach, hits extremely hard with both hands, and is particularly potent with his body attack”. Cotto defeated Mosley later that same year, then followed his up with a stoppage of tough contender Alfonso Gomez. In late 2008, Cotto was defeated by fellow welterweight slugger Antonio Margarito in one of the most highly anticipated contests of the year. The bout has since been the subject of much debate, due to alleged foreign plaster-like material found in Margarito’s gloves in a 2009 fight against Shane Mosley. Whatever happened in the first Cotto-Margarito fight, it did seem to take a lot out of Cotto. He has never quite regained his status as possibly the scariest fighter in his division, but his TKO win over Margarito in the rematch, and a 2012 fight against Floyd Mayweather showed he can still be a dangerous competitor to anyone. Cotto lost the decision in the latter, but bloodied Mayweather’s nose in a rough-and-tumble bout few expected. Cotto is still a huge draw in a sport that demands tough, aggressive heroes, and a fight against undefeated Mexican prospect Saul “Canelo” Alvarez would be an enormous hit at the box office for both fighters.

There is only one **Ricky Hatton**, and in 2007 he was still undefeated and on top of the British boxing world. Hatton is noted for being “an extremely aggressive fighter who uses his strength and stamina to crowd opponents”. That style made him a star in his home country, but it also got him a lot of attention and respect in America, too. Perhaps even more endearing to boxing fans was Hatton’s well chronicled “inclination towards beer swilling and pie eating between fights”, something that earned him the affectionate nickname “Ricky Fatton”. At twenty-eight, Hatton was trending up towards the pound-for-pound elite, so he took the chance to confirm his status against fellow superstar Floyd Mayweather that December. It was an absolutely brilliant

fight night atmosphere in Las Vegas, but Hatton's throng traveling well-wishers couldn't help him against vintage Mayweather. After stunning Mayweather early, the dominant fighter of his era settled down to take over the bout, ultimately ending it over Hatton by TKO 10. Hatton rebounded the next year with wins over Juan Lazcano and Paulie Malignaggi, but met his demise against Manny Pacquiao in 2009 in perhaps the most brutal knockout of the new millennium. Hatton retired soon after, but he's poised to make a comeback this November after a three year hiatus, which has many fight fans excited to once again raucously cheer for the gregarious welterweight from Manchester.

Houston's **Juan Diaz** "rose above the lightweight pack with his emphatic win over Acelino Freitas" to make the twenty-three-year-old the preeminent up-and-coming boxing "buzzsaw" on the list. Evans notes Diaz as the "premier Diaz" of the time, proving his mettle against some of the best lightweights in the world to create quite the separation between himself and the other notable lightweight fighters of the era with the same surname, IBF titlist Julio Diaz and WBC champion David Diaz. Diaz was a pre-law student at the University of Houston – Downtown, and perhaps had his sights set outside the boxing ring sooner than most of his contemporaries because of it. Diaz stayed undefeated until losing a split decision versus veteran contender Nate Campbell in 2008. His marketability remained, though, and Diaz used it to get a bout against Juan Manuel Marquez in 2009. Diaz lost the thrilling contest by TKO 9, then lost two of his next three contests before calling it a career as a fighter and focusing on his outside-of-the-ring business exploits.

A young **Amir Khan,** then only twenty, was already "one of the biggest names in British boxing" in 2007. Still, boxing experts like Evans saw his potential demise just around the corner. Sure, Khan possessed all the intriguing qualities in 2007 that he does now. His "blistering quickness of foot and hand", exceptional reflexes, and long-range punching prowess made him a sensational prospect. However, his flaws where equally as evident then as they are now, too. Evans notes Khan as a young competitor who "leaves himself open to counters" before going through all the early times in his career he had either been buzzed or down on the canvas. Khan was knocked out by slugger Breidis Prescott in 2008, lost a split decision to Lamont Peterson in 2011, and was knocked out again just this year by Danny Garcia. Khan has recently decided to spit with his trainer, Freddie Roach, in search for answers to questions perhaps his chin has already told.

No one could have foreseen what **Manny Pacquiao** was about to do five years ago. Evans notes the constant improvement of the impressive champion, who was then already considered elite. His "footwork and balance" improved considerably under trainer Freddie Roach, but Pacquiao began one of the more impressive runs in history for a man his size that very year seemingly out of nowhere. Pacquiao decisioned Mexican superstars Marco Antonio Barrera and Juan Manuel Marquez in succession before moving up to lightweight to snag the WBC

lightweight title from David Diaz. Afterwards, he utterly destroyed Oscar De La Hoya, Ricky Hatton and Miguel Cotto at welterweight, then continued his historically great run by picking up wins against Joshua Clottey, Antonio Margarito and Shane Mosley. Pacquiao never made his way to the ring against Mayweather, though, which is the fight everyone has wanted to see for what seems like years now, and he has now lost a disputed decision to Timothy Bradley. No one is sure how many fights the thirty-three-year-old Filipino sensation has left in him, but he's due for a fourth fight against nemesis Juan Manuel Marquez this December. Assuming he wins that one, he'd likely consider a rematch against Bradley before Mayweather, so fight fans may always be left wondering who the greatest fighter of the era truly was.

Forever undefeated **Edwin Valero** was just a few years and five fights from his death in 2007. Valero, who won every prizefight he ever had by stoppage, was "one of the big hitters of world boxing." His career was momentarily halted after a failed MRI brain scan in 2004, but he found fights outside of the United States (the NYSAC had banned him because of it) to keep his career on track. He earned the WBC lightweight title in 2009 and held it until his tragic demise. Valero committed suicide in 2010 by hanging himself with his own clothes in a jail cell as he awaited arraignment for the alleged murder of his own wife, Jennifer Viera. With his death, fight fans are left wondering not only how good he could have been inside of the ring, but also how much damage was truly done to him by the sport we love. Was his tragic end a result of his craft, or was he merely drawn to pugilism because of something already inside of him?

Perhaps surprisingly, people were still wondering what to do with **Juan Manuel Marquez** in 2007. Five years ago, Marquez had yet to face Pacquiao a second or third time. He was fresh off an important win over Marco Antonio Barrera but had yet to really solidify himself as the best lightweight in the world and a legit contender for top tier pound-for-pound status. Nonetheless, Marquez was praised for his "blend of sharp counterpunching, controlled power, head-shifting defensive prowess, and his defined sense of time and distance." To put it another way, over these last few years Marquez has shown himself to be a master pugilist, a true technician. He's been close enough in every Pacquiao fight to be seen the victor in the eyes of many, and he's constantly challenged himself against the very best. Since his last loss, in 2006 to Chris John, Marquez has only lost three times, twice to Pacquiao and once to Floyd Mayweather. During that timeframe, he's defeated numerous notables, including Rocky Juarez, Juan Diaz (twice) and Joel Casamayor.

It's funny to see **Chris John** on the list. The Indonesian featherweight, who was also an amateur Wushu gold medalist in his home country, defeated Juan Manuel Marquez in 2006, but has never really cashed in on it despite his undefeated record remaining intact. Sure, he suffered a bogus draw against Rocky Juarez in 2009 in the latter's hometown, but avenged it in

Las Vegas later in the year. Since then, he's remained a titlist who never seems to get a big break against a big money opponent. Is it because he's too dangerous? Or is he being protected by his handlers? He'll need solid opponents to establish any sort of lasting legacy (with U.S. fight fans at least), so securing bouts against the likes of Yuriorkis Gamboa, Orlando Salido or Mikey Garcia is vitally necessary for the 33-year-old.

Finally, junior featherweight **Rafael Marquez**, younger brother of Juan Manuel Marquez, rounded out the list of twenty top fighters in the sport. Marquez had just scored a sensational win over Israel Vazquez in 2007. He'd go on to lose the next two to Vazquez in succession, then evened it up in 2010 with a third round knockout of his archrival in culmination of one of the greatest four fight series of the modern era (perhaps fittingly knotted up at two apiece). The fights took their toll on both fighters, though, and Marquez hasn't quite excelled at the elite level since. He's lost two of his last four, including an eighth round stoppage by hard-hitting Juan Manuel Lopez. Evans notes some significant talk at the time of the Marquez brothers "being the best boxing brothers in the sport's history." Indeed, they'd be on the very short list of siblings to discuss worthy of said honor, likely alongside the Klitschkos (Wladimir and Vitali) and the Spinks (Michael and Leon).

So there you have it, folks. Now, I can throw this old Ring Magazine in the recycling bin and (like you) go back to getting all my latest boxing news and information from The Sweet Science and
The Boxing Channel
.

You can email Kelsey McCarson at theboxingstop@yahoo.com , or follow him on twitter @TheRealKelseyMc
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Comment on this article

Radam G says:

Nice copy! Holla!

deepwater says:

valero was going to take over the boxing world but his demons got him first. watching valero spar on youtube is sick

ultimoshogun says:

Yeah, every now and then I wonder what might have been with Valero. There was some great matches to be made. Too bad the guy was a loose cannon outside the ring.