

Adrien Broner Opens Up

Written by Michael Woods
Thursday, 11 October 2012 15:28



Such t-shirts, and a refusal to bow down and apologize for stuff like the Escobedo scale fail mean Broner will have plenty of haters. But the writer saw another side of the brash boxer at HBO headquarters, and had his eyes opened. (Hogan)

I do not know if I saw the future of boxing at HBO headquarters on Wednesday. All due respect to then music critic Jon Landau, who knew what Bruce Springsteen was and would be when he

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saw the Jerseyite do his thing at a Harvard Square concert on May 9, 1974, but I cannot be sure that Adrien Broner will be seen as "the best boxer who ever put on a pair of gloves" when the 23 year-old Cincinnati boxer-entertainer hangs up his mitts.

But I did exit the building Wednesday after hearing Broner answer press queries for almost an hour with a a new outlook on the 24-0 hitter, who at times had struck me as someone whose talent for self-hype outstripped his skill set.

No, Broner didn't back off the boastful side of himself. He didn't seek to stroke the egos of the fightwriters in the room, cunningly telling them that he thanked them for attending, and for helping keep him "relevant." Indeed, he gently lobbed a shot at us, dismissing us in so many words as "bu--holes," at one point.

Yet, after the session, because he explained in more depth where he came from, and some of what he has gone through to form his personality, I found myself veering closer to the territory of being a straight-up fan. Yes, as I heard Frank Deford admit on an NPR essay a couple days ago, it is true. Writers do have their favorites, and just because they manage to put a lid on the rooting interest in press row when one of their faves gets it done, that doesn't mean that they can maintain a robotic streak of objectivity. And, of course, writers can grow to dislike an athlete, be it for their fighting style, or more often, for personality or behavior traits which don't mesh with their own preferences or world view. Me, I've told you over the years, I prefer the "do, not say I will do" types, I lean towards the strong silent types Tony Soprano labeled a "Gary Cooper" type character when bemoaning the dearth of them in today's society. But in the last couple years, I've spent a fair amount of time puzzling with myself why a Floyd Mayweather talks and acts like he does. And I figured out not that long ago that it bordered on the semi-useless for me to devote too much time to solving that puzzle. Because without walking a mile in the shoes he walked in growing up, experiencing some of the traumas and dramas he did growing up, in the places he grew up in, so unlike the Wellesley, Mass. fancy-schmancy household I grew up in, I would never be able to wrap my brain around all sides of Floyd.

And on the subject of perhaps the second-most polarizing man in the game, Broner...When I hear him say that in one, two, three fights, he could well be *the* man in the game, I could hear that, and tsk-tsk him in my head, or on this page, for boasting, for being excessively cocky, for driving off the road of confidence, into a ditch of ludicrous hubris.

If I wanted to to, I could, when I hear Broner say, "Critics are like buttholes, I don't listen to 'em.

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If I want to hear a butthole, I pass gas," I could get into a thin-skinned tizzy, and mutter to you about a manner that screams "punk."

But instead, after hearing the 23 year-old let down the guard, and tell us a bit more about where he came from, and what hurdles he's gotten over, hurdles such as needing to fill his belly with syrup and bread sandwiches, and tap water, to quell a grumbling stomach, I'm inclined to see Broner and hear his trash-talking differently.

I'm quite sure many of you will not change your take on the kid, will still cringe when he says that it isn't a matter of whether he will fight the Brandon Rios', and Canelos, and Robert Guerreros, but whether they have the stones to accept a fight with him.

I'm sure I won't budge some of you when Broner says himself at 23 is superior to Floyd Mayweather at age 23, or when you hear the guy who had a hard time with Ponce De Leon say he doesn't think Nov. 17 foe Antonio Demarco will be able to do much against him.

Some of you might look at Mayweather put him and Broner side by side in your head and pick Floyd as the humbler of the two. When asked if his progress keeps up, in a year or two years he could see himself at 147 pounds or more, fighting Floyd Mayweather, Broner replied in the affirmative: "Of course, if he's around, I don't see him staying around too much longer. I don't know why he'd do that, that'd be dumb. Everyone know that age catches up to everyone, there's always the young lion with the same talent as you...that's too dangerous, I don't think he'd do it."

Wait, did he just really say that he didn't think Mayweather would be wise to fight him in a year or two, that that was a "dangerous" and foolish endeavor? He did, and it is those sort of statements which make Broner more of a must-see fighter...because he is building an immense wall of expectations for himself to try to climb over, and there will be no shortage of people who watch him like they do Nascar races: hoping for him to crash and burn.

I asked Broner if after Demarco he'd fight Mayweather, leap from 135 to 147 pounds. "I love him and all but anyone who's on the other side of ring from me, I got five kids ...I love Floyd to death but I don't care who is on the other side of the ring..when I get in there I have tunnel vision."

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So, Broner versus Mayweather, in a ring, tomorrow, would you beat Floyd? Broner paused..."Honestly, I'm going to be honest with you and myself I have a lot to work on, but at 23 I would have kicked his ass. I do what he do now, in his prime."

You give him points for chutzpah...or do his words make you see him as a villain, as public boxing enemy number one, who you'd pay to see get some humble pounded into him? That likely depends on where you came from. Broner came from Cincinnati, which doesn't ring a bell with me, but the way he said it on Wednesday, means he came from a place that most of your movers and shakers pass by on their way to less complicated, more opulent locations.

"I come from Cincinnati," he told the press Wednesday, describing how he intended to fight for the US in the 2008 Olympics, but instead got taken off that path because he "got into some trouble."

What he did, he wouldn't specify, but here's how Broner put it: "Some big trouble too. They tried to give me football numbers but for the grace of God I came out on top." I didn't get the "football" reference, so I asked for a clarifier. "A receiver, like 85 years, stuff like that," Broner explained.

Without us asking explicitly, he led us into a detailed explanation of how and why he got into the sport. "I'm smart, my mom she was on dean's list and all that, so after school I would have school at home, I would have to read books, do all this, all this really burned me out." He said he was bored in school, because he already knew what was being taught, and as teen knew he wouldn't grow to adore school. He knew he could sell drugs, he said, but realized that was a dead end. Basketball would be a fine path, but he knew Spud Webb was an exception, not a rule, in the NBA. "Boxing," Broner said, "I always found boxing, always came back to boxing, boxing, boxing. Boxing, this is it, this is gonna be the thing gonna take me over the top." He was 18.

Before he got full-tilt into boxing, he had to do some time, more than a year, but Broner said that was made more palatable because family and some friends stood by him. He promised God and himself he'd go hard after the boxing goal if He saw it fit to help him through the rough stretch.

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I know it made me better comprehend what could be seen as cocky talk when he admitted, "I know what it's like to wake up in the middle of the night and say 'I'm hungry,' and see what's to eat and say, 'F---, I got to eat syrup and bread again ... and water. I know what that feels like."

And I don't. And so I think it's wise for me to give extra respect to, and latitude to, people who have come from that, to where Broner is today. It is fashionable in many circles today to blast the Have Nots for not having enough character to rise above meager circumstances, to dismiss as loafers, as Takers, the jobless or those needing government assistance to stay afloat. One candidate for the Vice President post was just seen in an interview saying that, basically, the inner cities could be cleaned up if the citizens living there were taught "good discipline." I don't subscribe to that one-size-fits-all-wretches view; I am not under the illusion that I am made of such solid stuff that if I were born into a sub-optimal economic situation, and wasn't Caucasian, I would rise above, and triumph over sub-humble beginnings.

I have to say, boxing is blessed, because we have this every man for himself system, with no commissioner strong-arming athletes into toeing the line, and sticking to politically correct speech. You saw that when Broner got into the issue of race. On Oct. 3, Ring TV ran a story, a Q'n A, on Broner. He'd chatted with Lem Satterfield, who I know as a decent soul and a total professional. Broner touched on the matter of whether he'd get props if and when he beat Demarco. "Like I've told you before, man, they will never give me the credit when it's due," he told Satterfield. "Even if I go in and I knock this guy out in the first round, they're going to always find something, you know? They're going to always find something. But what can they say? I was supposed to do it? I was faster and I've got more talent? What? I mean, he's the world champion at 135, and he just came off of some great stoppages, and so whatever I go in there and do, of course I want them to give me what I deserve. But just being me, and, you know, I'm an African American. So, you know, they're going to always find something wrong, and they're going to always find something to say. So that's why I just do what I do, and I don't even worry about the critics, man."

Satterfield asked him to expound, asking, "What do you mean about your being an African American?"

"I really don't want to get into it because I don't want to make it a racial thing because I love the Hispanics, I love the Mexicans," Broner said. "You know, I love all races of people. But at the end of the day, man, we all know that it's so hard for us. It's so hard. I don't really want to get into it, but you know what's going on." So Satterfield let the subject drop, understandably. The subject was again brought up Wednesday.

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Asked to clarify that Oct. 3 story, Broner said he meant that African-Americans don't support other African-American fighters, not the way Hispanic fans support other Hispanic fighters. "It's so hard for us to support our own, coming up from where we come from, they don't want to see the next man doing better than them," Broner said. So, black fans don't support black fighters like some other groups support boxers of the same race or ethnicity? "Exactly," Broner said. "It's the truth."

He said he though the Ring piece made him look like he was "racist or something" but I didn't get that from reading it, and knowing Satterfield, and how much he cares, I have to stick up for Lem, and his professionalism, and put it out there that any sort of tabloid-y exploitation is not his way, not ever. Also, you might recall Lamont Peterson touched on the same subject back in April 2011, with Satterfield. "Black people are not showing the support that's necessary to make household names in boxing," Peterson said then.

I'm looking forward to keeping tabs on Broner's arc. He could be a stellar role model for many of those kids in Cincy, and other Have Not neighborhoods, to look up to, so I'm hoping he will embrace that power he will be able to dispense. I suspect you sort of had to be there to have that change of heart, that new depth of appreciation for Broner that washed over me. Hey, the kid himself noted that the cameras and the editors know what to capture and splice and present to stir the pot and draw viewers. His brashest statements and behavior will be collected and disseminated. "I'm not a villain," Broner explained at HBO. "I'm just being me. I know it can rub off on some people some way, 'This guy is too cocky, too arrogant, this and that. But when they get to know about me they fall in love with me."

Maybe not, but I think moving forward, if not love, more boxing fans will at least grow to better understand, and respect Adrien Broner.

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deepwater says:

You got to love the freedom of speech. lets see some good fights and it doesnt matter how silly this guy sounds. a winner gets bragging right so its all good. i could care less about tap water and maple syrup and run in with the law , it wont be the first time or the last time, lets talk about the fast kids style because he sure does have some style. give people of any race a reason to pay for a fight and they will. In nyc I sure do see people from every race form every section

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come to the fights. boxing brings people together not drive them apart. considering what clinton/bush/obama have done to the economy its a wonder people can scrape 2 bits together for a decent payperview nevermind a few hundred on tickets ,drinks,food,haircuts to look sharp . stop spending my taxes on npr! if people want to listen to all things considered then I am sure it can be funded by customers. no need for us to pay an npr guy/gal \$650,000 a year when we the people are broke.if PBS can pay Kerger \$632,233 in annual compensation—as reported on the 990 tax forms all nonprofits are required to file—surely it can operate without tax dollars.

brownsugar says:

Whoever wrote this is good...

Gotta go work out will post later.

SouthPaul says:

Great detail, good evening read on a rainy So Cal day. Now I'm pumped for the Demarco bout. Hell, I may even fly into Ac for it. That's wassaup.

deepwater says:

Valero was a beast so no shame in losing that one. I would like demarco to test him at least. Hows the undercard?Uh oh. I was gonna keep it light and make a joke about was broner eating syrup sandwiches because his 500 lb daddy ate everything else but the damn brush. My co worker mr c wants to call out woods for saying if he was born black brown or other then white then he would be hustling or much worse.not cool.think about it.

ali says:

Broner needs to come clean and admitt he's on drugs. Saying you would have kicked Mayweather *** at 23 is really hilarious im LMAO.

SouthPaul says:

The word hustling shouldn't be offensive to most anyone who grew up in the inner-city. Whether it be legitimate hustling or selling dope hustling ... It's not like it's some foreign word or thought to be used when describing how one handled their business in ones rough , tough, or uncomfortable predicament. But in response to the discipline comment ...its not far from the truth. The idea of community needs to be taught and practiced. Need to somehow get thru to folks that, ok, don't hold the deed to the house or apartment you rent but by golly it's yours while you're living in it so you might want to take care of it the best you can. Same applies for parks, super markets, clubs, so on and so for. It indeed starts with YOU. If you yourself aren't willing to do the up keep.. why should anyone else? This is a hot topic for me. I've lived in the worst and best situations at different points of my life so I've seen it first hand. Anyhow, I didn't find anything offensive with what the author wrote. Sounds like someone is reaching for an argument. That's wasssup from my perspective.

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deepwater says:

I agree 100% it starts with you. nice comment. hustling is not an offensive word at all. I hustle all year long I got 2 jobs and take call so I get called in at 3 in the morning some nights. mr c right next to me delivered pizzas and did landscaping to pay for his college just like I paid for my own education. I sure do have a problem with this statement="I am not under the illusion that I am made of such solid stuff that if I were born into a sub-optimal economic situation, and wasn't Caucasian, I would rise above, and triumph over sub-humble beginnings." thats a damn shame. props to the guys in broners situation who take jobs and hustle the legal way into a better life. also know one gets a 85 year bid by buying a dime and flipping it for 20. maybe someone can get a crush on a boxer that works full time driving trucks and then puts in 2 hours at the gym everynight and eats noodles so his kid gets some chicken

Radam G says:

Oh wow! Times never change. I'm reminded of GOAT Ali and the SCLA Alis of when the GOAT was around Money May's age back then. The GOAT was running off at the mouth of how good and fast he was still. And that at the same age and weight of youth, he was faster than Sugar Ray Robinson and coulda, woulda kicked the Sugarman's @ss. One can find that interview with the late, great mouth Howard Cosell on YouTube or Daily Motion.;

Danggit! I was rugrating, lap pissing and fudging wif ev'y Jack and Jill and dey pail of water. And to this day, I faintly remember how all the ancient, getting-ready to take a dirt nap SCLA Alis were losing their minds because GOAT Ali was saying that he was better "flat-footed Joe Louis" and faster and even better than SRR.

I clearly remember this club fighter Akins getting really hot about GOAT Ali's boasting. Mr. Akins, what I called him, was saying jive about the GOAT that SCLA Ali is spittin' about Broner. Then a couple years later, Mr. Akins was heated about Leon Spinks calling the GOAT out and saying that "Ali is da greatest, but I'm da latest."

Danggit! It never stops! Guess what 92-year-old muthacomplainer, I was saw last night at Barono Casino in Lakeside, outside San Diego, Cali.? You guess it! Mr. Akins. Dude had his thick-@ss bi-focus reading the TSS Broner piece on his Ipad. And you know me! I'm down with O-P-P! And fudgin' wif people. So I hollered at the ancient timer. And I noticed that he was heated.

"Fu*k dat youngin," he said, as he pointed to the Broner copy. "Somabytch don't kno' how da be respectin' da fightas dat claim is dey idols."

OMFG! Then Mr. Akins started telling me about how "mad" he was at "Clay for doin' da same syet against Joe Louis and Sugar Ray Robinson."

I told Mr. Akins that "that was life."

"The youth wanna be at the top, and the old lion just have to move down. Broner is a hype, but

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he can fight. Remember that Joe Louis, Sugar Ray Robinson and Muhammad Ali stayed around to and the young Gs tapped doze /@sses."

"I kno' dat, kid," he spit. But it just don't right." Then Mr. Akins's ancient arse fell to sleep. Old cat was snoring like a growling mountain lion. I was like WTF! I got he got bore. Then his fine-@ss great-granddaughter woke his old arse up and took him home. But, SCLA, girl was packin!' Serena Williams, Kim Kadasian and J-Lo and even Beonce (name misspelled) ain't da back of Mr. Akin's ggd. Holla!

brownsugar says:

Wow,..all you guys should come down to the capitol of the CornFields and hit the open mic.

Well we'll see soon enough what Broners made of in november.

I see a sensational win, with Broners hand raised inside the distance.

Then the real tests begin.