

RASKIN'S RANTS: Mares, Moreno, Martirosyan, Mikey & More

Written by Eric Raskin

Monday, 12 November 2012 12:03



After that 120-106 card, we have added Dr. James Gen-Kim to our watch list. May his spambox be flooded with offers for Lasik surgery.

I have a very strict rule in place: Whenever 15 live fights air on premium cable in a 26-hour span, I write a "Raskin's Rants" column. No exceptions. So here goes with a Leo-Santa-Cruz-like non-stop assault of scattered thoughts at the end of a hectic,

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DVR-space-sapping weekend of boxing:

· Let's start with the unofficial main event of the weekend, Abner Mares vs. Anselmo Moreno to determine the mandatory challenger to junior feather champ Nonito Donaire (if you take all the alphabet belts out of the equation and simplify things, that's what this fight was). I scored the fight 115-111 for Mares, and I thought if anything (based upon the Twitterverse's scoring) I was being a tad Mares-friendly in my judging. Apparently my idea of "Mares-friendly" was a gentlemanly handshake compared to the dry-hump of "Mares-friendly" that was the official scoring. Look, the decision went to the right guy. But just because the right guy got it doesn't mean a bad scorecard should be swept under the rug, and Dr. James Jen-Kin's 120-106 in Mares' favor has to be in the running for the worst scorecard ever. I'm not exaggerating for effect. No individual card in Pacquiao-Bradley or Williams-Lara or anything Gale Van Hoy has ever done was worse than giving Mares every single round. Is Jen-Kin old and incompetent? I think I speak for everyone when I say I hope that's the explanation for his scorecard.

· The worst part of Jen-Kin's scorecard is that it prevented me from leading with this: I think this was the best all-around performance of Mares' career. Given the level of opposition, even taking into account the late fade, Mares has never looked better. He might be in the pound-for-pound top 10 now; he's at least in the discussion.

· In addition to cementing his status as a pound-for-pound candidate, Mares also cemented his status as a dirty fighter. It's a designation the boxing world has been hesitant to attach to him because he's a pint-sized, clean-cut pretty boy. His look seems incongruous with the reality that he bends the rules as much as Bernard Hopkins. But that *is* the reality. Mares' instinct when he sees an opening for a cheap shot is to take it every time, whether that means firing a low blow, an elbow, or my personal favorite, a blatant straight right hand to the kidney. Yet somehow it was Moreno who suffered a point deduction! Al Bernstein had every right to be apoplectic about that. I haven't seen Al this bent out of shape since NBC's

Smash

went on an extended hiatus.

· A further note on Mares' dirty tactics and Bernstein's response to them: I thought Al nailed it during the discussion of low blows when he acknowledged that, yes, Moreno was pulling Mares' head down, but if you start to throw a punch after your head has been pulled down, you need to adjust your aim. Maybe Mares wasn't throwing intentional low blows. But at the very least, his attitude was, "I'm going to let this punch fly and I don't care if it lands somewhere illegal."

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· Meanwhile, huge credit to Moreno for battling back in a fight in which, at points during rounds five and six, it looked like he was going to get stopped. He came up short, but his work over the second half of the fight prevented his stock from dropping.

· As for the weekend's other controversially scored fight, I'm going to say something that I haven't really seen anyone else say: The draw between Erislandy Lara and Vanes Martirosyan was an all-out robbery. Lara took Martirosyan to school. I gave Martirosyan one round. I could see giving him two or three. But to give him more than that is to reward ineffective plodding and wild swinging and missing. All night long, Vanes flailed toward his target and Lara picked him off with quick, short, counter right hooks. I hate to use CompuBox stats as a justification or rebuttal of a result, but in this case, they speak to what was happening in the ring. Lara landed 74 punches, Martirosyan just 33. Those numbers reflect the kind of fight it was. One guy was getting a modest amount done offensively, and the other guy was getting nothing done offensively. From the first round, the robbery was in progress, as Lara dictated every single moment of the round—he was quicker, displayed superior defense, and landed more punches (11-3, according to the punch counters)—yet Harold Lederman somehow gave the round to Martirosyan, and so did two of the judges. I refuse to blame Lara for his inability to impress the judges. I blame the judges who either can't tell what's landing or don't care what's landing.

· With all that said, Dave Moretti did the right thing by scoring the partial ninth round even. If you want to castigate him for giving four of the first eight rounds to Martirosyan, be my guest. But to try to declare a winner in a round that lasts 26 seconds is absurd, and Moretti was the only judge with the common sense to call it a 10-10 round. Frankly, I'm not a fan of the "score the partial round" rule in the first place. Either ditch the rule, modify it so it only applies if at least half the round is completed, or encourage judges to go 10-10 if nothing of consequence happens in the aborted round.

· HBO's Max Kellerman summed up my feelings about Lara when he told him after the fight, "I haven't seen you lose yet, but you can't get the wins!" That was a good line. On the flip side, "kissing your sister"—come on, you're better than that, Max. (I will say in Max's defense that it's a live broadcast and if a cliché is the first thing that comes to mind, sometimes you have to go with it. The same excuse does not apply to writing. I will not name names, but those of you who express yourselves in clichés know who you are.)

· While on the topic of commentators, Lou DiBella was fairly entertaining in his Epix debut. He's a natural. That said, I must poke two holes in the DiBella-color-analyst experiment. First, I'm surprised someone who's been around boxing this long so vastly overrates the role of size in a fight (Lou did the same thing when he was on *Ring Theory* a couple of months ago and insisted

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Julio Cesar Chavez Jr.'s size scared him going into the Sergio Martinez fight). And second, the conflict of interest inherent in Lou being an active promoter makes it so that he can't make this a remotely regular gig. A network like HBO could never use him because other promoters would be outraged. And even in this specific spot on Epix, he inevitably found himself in awkward situations where he had to make decisions as to whether or not to reference fighters in his stable, such as Tor Hamer. DiBella as broadcaster is simply not a sustainable arrangement.

· I'll have more to say about Wladimir Klitschko and the heavyweight division in another article on another site later this week, but for now, two quick thoughts: First, Wlad's win over Mariusz Wach was the most entertaining fight either Klitschko brother has been a part of in more than seven years. So, congrats to all involved in Klitschko-Wach, I guess. And second, can we please stop trying to assign the Klitschko brothers (or any other active fighters) a ranking among the all-time greats before their careers are complete? What if that random fifth-round right hand from Wach had kayoed Wladimir? We'd all be re-writing his legacy today. As you may recall if you were watching boxing a little over a decade ago, when Lennox Lewis got flattened by Hasim Rahman everyone with a keyboard or a microphone was tearing Lennox's legacy apart. Then he won three fights and retired, and now he's in almost everyone's all-time heavyweight top 10. To say when Wladimir Klitschko fights that we're watching one of the 10 greatest heavyweights ever is foolish—just as it would be to declare that he *isn't* one of the 10 greatest heavyweights ever. He's one of the two greatest heavyweights in the game right now. Let's hold off on any further analysis until after he retires.

· Rough weekend for Wach. First he has to settle for second place in his heavyweight title fight, then he has to settle for third place in the Scariest Face of the Weekend contest, behind the new-look Alfredo Angulo and what's left of Mickey Rourke.

· I've decided that Mikey Garcia is the *Boardwalk Empire* of boxing. You always feel like greatness is around the corner, but instead what you get is just good enough to keep your interest. There are inevitable slow stretches, and they're often followed by even slower stretches, and then, just when you've started to accept mild disappointment, something spectacular happens. Garcia's fight with Jonathan Barros gave us what most Garcia fights give us: an explosive ending to a steady, workmanlike performance.

· Anyone else find that "no mas" from Barros a bit peculiar? Either he doesn't have a whole lot of heart (which I don't believe is the case) or he was a lot more effed up than he appeared after that hook knocked him down.

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- Just came up with a brilliant idea for a terrible movie: A kid with cancer receives Alfredo Angulo's hair thanks to Locks of Love, and the hair provides special powers and turns the kid into the baddest S.O.B. in the schoolyard. (Well, you know, until he runs into the kid who received Kermit Cintron's hair.)

- In all seriousness, I didn't realize how much I missed Angulo until the bell rang on Saturday night. Boxing is much, much better off with "El Perro" around.

- Saturday night confirmed that, whether Showtime provides HBO with any video clips or not, Leo Santa Cruz does indeed deserve a spot on Jim Lampley's "Gatti List." He's right up there near Brandon Rios, Mike Alvarado, and Victor Ortiz among the most consistently entertaining fighters on the planet. And I love the fact that Santa Cruz goes about his business with a smile on his face half the time.

- I thought the combination of Mauro Ranallo, Al Bernstein, and Paulie Malignaggi worked much better the second time around. Bernstein was actually given opportunities to speak on occasion this time, and Malignaggi dialed down the screaming considerably. The content of what Malignaggi has to say is undeniably strong; if he can perfect the delivery, he'll be as good in this role as Antonio Tarver was.

- Having offered that praise, a note of constructive criticism to all of the three-man crews working Saturday, on Showtime, HBO, and Epix: Occasional silence is permitted. The mere sight of two guys punching each other can, for at least a few seconds, qualify as entertainment all by itself.

- I like Nathan Cleverly. But all the Joe Calzaghe comparisons aren't doing him any favors. And I get why Cleverly would want to fight Bernard Hopkins. But I don't see the logic in B-Hop wanting to fight him. Why would a 48-year-old (by the time they might fight) future Hall of Famer want to face a good boxer half his age with no name value? Sorry, but I don't see Hopkins chasing alphabet trinkets at this stage in his career. He wanted Jean Pascal because it was the right style matchup and because it was for a real, lineal championship. Neither of those boxes are checked in the case of Cleverly, and therefore, I don't for one second believe this fight will happen.

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· My personal favorite prospect in boxing: Jesse Magdaleno. (Apologies for the Larry-King-in-*USA Today*

-like brevity and randomness of that "Rants" entry.)

· It was depressing—but wholly understandable—to see how much less fanfare there was for Friday night's Olympians' debut as compared to a similar HBO show at the Theater at Madison Square Garden that I attended in 2000. As for the quality of the matchmaking on this "special" edition of *ShoBox*, it's pretty much what you expect for pro debuts. I'm fine with it. But if these guys want to have more set-up fights like these going forward (and they should), let them do it off TV. We don't need an entire army of Demetrius Andrades clogging up our airwaves.

· The only guy among the five debuting Olympians who really impressed me was Errol Spence. On the opposite end of the spectrum, I fear that Rau'Shee Warren spent four years too many honing an amateur style.

· Gary Russell Jr. is either being horribly mismanaged, or his handlers know something about him that we don't.

· We have another intriguing weekend of fights awaiting us, and the best of them will be Hernan "Tyson" Marquez vs. Brian Viloria on WealthTV. This is the biggest hurdle left standing between Rios-Alvarado and Fight of the Year honors.

· I was going to pick Johnathon Banks to upset Seth Mitchell this Saturday night. Then I found out it was [this](#) Johnathon Banks. Not [this](#) one.

· In honor of Veterans Day, I invite you to enjoy [this Ring Theory clip](#) in which Bill Dettloff, Tim Starks, and I pay tribute to (alleged) war veteran Norman Stone. If you enjoy this, I encourage you to pony up a few bucks and subscribe to the podcast. It's what the proud men and women who have served our country in combat would want you to do.

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<http://ringtheory.podbean.com>.

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Radam G says:

Nice Ranting. Holla!

brownsugar says:

Mares used to boxed a lot more before he started fighting the very best at 118 and beyond. Lately he's been relying on wild bull rushes while winging looping punches with his head down. Personally I hope we can see better execution from Mares moving forward (and some point deductions when needed). Don't like watching guys shoving, swinging wildly, and clashing/fouling so much that it leads to frequent breaks by the ref.

Hope we can see Mares against Donaire or either Rigo and Cruz in the future. Betcha Mares won't be that careless against a deadly boxer like Donaire or Rigo. (against Cruz anything goes).

Finally there's been a lot of noise about Hopkins vs Cleverly on March 9th, I havent looked close enough to see where the source of this info is coming from. Can't say if it's valid or not. If the fight happens in Europe, it would be huge. Win or lose,... Bhop could earn a nice big retirement check.

I have to disagree about Lara,.. watching a gifted boxer float like a butterfly but seldom stinging like one is like watching an NFL game where the goal is get no more than 3.3 yard per down... no hail-Mary passes.. no 50yard runs up the sideline, and no 12 yard Quarterback sneaks up the middle. More boring than watching the Gold Medal round of an Olympic Race-Walking contest.

I do think the Lara won, but I also believe he'll get better because of the resulting decision... I enjoy defensive guys and slick boxers, but not when they're running and throwing less than 10 punches a round...it like an advertisement for a cigarette break....(and a signal to light the ensence to repell the odor)

Personally I enjoyed watching the Olympic kids. They aren't the class of 76' but it's all we have at the moment. Even Leonard and Carbahol had to start off with less than optimal opposition..... Good move by Showtime to develop new talent nobody really knows about yet . Out of those five newcomers at least 2 will become household names.

Gary Russell is almost as spectacular as Roy Jones in the speed department (although not as big of a showboat). Beating guys that decisively is rarely seen no matter what the quality of opposition is like. Russell has mastered boxing to such an extent he's probably the front-runner

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in the razzle-dazzle department..... Lets see what happens when he moves up to the next level..... I think 2013 may be his year to shine.

Cruz is also awesome but in a different way..... he brings the excitement of Rios without having to use his chin at bait. How anybody can develop that kind of stamina is a mystery to me,.. but we're getting more and more boxers who have outstanding punch output... Old School is becoming New School again.

Radam G says:

BTW, just so the writer will know. Gary Russell is being managed in the way -- with extreme caution -- that any superhype is. He will be exposed for a weak chin, slow puncher and a bit gutless as soon as he makes a step upper. Da _____ will even get a severe nosebleed. I wish that I will be wrong about him, but I super doubt it big time.

But -- like always- we will see. And you muthasuckas will hate me some more. Because I keep being right about the entitled-acting jack@\$\$es that you guys find to adore. Holla!

ali says:

B-sug now that was one hellva post..

ali says:

Radam I think your wrong Gary Russell is going to be a HOF fighter when its all said and done.

Radam G says:

We will see, SCLA Ali. GR is a Kelsie Banks. And Banks was suppose to be fast and a Roy Jones Jr in the making. Anybody can be against punching bags with eyeballs. Holla!

brownsugar says:

just tryna do my part Ali...

Spinach Chin says:

Regarding Barros' quitting against Mikey Garcia...when Garcia landed the KO punch Barros grabbed at the side of his head in pain, much the way Ray Oliveira did against Emmanuel Augustus years ago. He may have done the right thing.

CPX says:

Boardwalk Empire comparison was excellent