

Enigmatic, Polarizing Broner Should Stop Malignaggi

Written by Blake Hochberger

Wednesday, 19 June 2013 09:20

A black and white promotional poster for a boxing event. The background features two boxers, Malignaggi and Broner, in a gym setting. Malignaggi is on the left, looking slightly to the right, and Broner is on the right, looking forward. The text is overlaid on the bottom half of the image. The main title 'MALIGNAGGI VS BRONER' is in large, bold, white letters. Below it, 'WELTERWEIGHT WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP' is written in smaller white letters. The next line is 'BANKS VS MITCHELL II' in white, with 'VS' in red, and 'HEAVYWEIGHT BOUT' in smaller white letters below it. The date and time 'SATURDAY JUNE 22 9 PM ET / 6 PM PT' are in white, with 'LIVE FROM BARCLAYS CENTER' in red below it. The Showtime logo is at the bottom center in red.

MALIGNAGGI
VS
BRONER
WELTERWEIGHT WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP
BANKS VS MITCHELL II
HEAVYWEIGHT BOUT
SATURDAY JUNE 22
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I don't like Adrien Broner, the person. I have no quarrel with brash, loud-mouthed, uber-confident guys who can back it up in the ring (see: I have no ill will towards Floyd Mayweather, Jr.). However, everything about Broner is annoying. His "hair brushing" gimmick? His ill-timed, poorly-delivered jokes and misconceived sense of humor? It's all a hopeless charade in trying to emulate the aforementioned Mayweather. Broner just doesn't get "it".

While Floyd can be rightly criticized for not fighting the best available opponents over the last decade, his in-ring skills and out-of-the ring popularity are unquestionable. He's the best in the business when considering the combination of fame, recognition, and skill.

While Twitter is not the ultimate measure of a man's popularity, it's certainly a good reference point. Floyd has over 4 million followers, but Broner has just 96,000. To be fair, Floyd has been at the top of the sport for a long time, and this is not an apples-apples comparison, but when you hear Broner referred to as "the future of boxing" or "the next big thing", you would expect a bigger fan following. And as someone who openly doesn't care for Broner, I am still accounted for as one of the 96,000.

What Adrien Broner does have is the single best weapon in all of boxing: His straight right hand. It's a God-given missile, and it will carry him to great heights as a prizefighter. Make no mistake, Broner is neither flawless nor unbeatable. When he tries to imitate Floyd's patented shoulder-roll defense, he gets tagged repeatedly for it. Fortunately for his handlers, he can take a punch just fine. His defensive liabilities will absolutely cost him as he continues stepping up in competition. In the meantime, Broner has the great equalizer in his right hand. It's his trump card, and it's his bailout. It's truly amazing how he can generate such power without cocking back, loading up, etc. It's like a supercharged jab, shot out like a pistol.

Broner constantly draws comparisons to Floyd Mayweather, Jr., and some of the reasons are obvious. The pre-fight antics, the trash talk, and the lightning-fast hand speed in the ring are clear similarities. The most identifiable similarity in their respective fighting styles is their quick right hands. However, there are some clear differences between the two fighters:

Difference 1: The good news for Broner.

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Floyd, for years, has won fights with his straight right alone. While inflicting minimal damage, it lands at will, keeps opponents off balance/out of sync, and racks up points. Earlier in Floyd's career, he would land explosive combinations and land several meaningful punches while his opponent tried to land one. Now, as an aging fighter, Floyd uses his straight right as both a lead and a counter, and it's nearly indefensible due to his accuracy, timing, and innate ability to know precisely when to throw it.

This is where the difference in their right hand lies. At 135 lbs, Broner's straight right is "Nyquil". It puts people to sleep (well aware that was a tacky reference) with concussive force, and at the very least snaps opponent's heads back enough to make them think twice about engaging in exchanges. It's as quick and fast as Floyd's right hand with a lot more power. And he's a finisher.

Difference 2: The bad news for Broner.

Adrien Broner doesn't know how to use his feet (either that, or he is simply lazy/undisciplined). He's extremely athletic, but he does not really outbox many opponents using his legs/movement. Floyd is the best I've ever seen in that regard. He can box circles around people, or lay on the ropes if he's lazy because he's that good. He's never on the ropes because he was forced there. His cerebral approach to boxing makes sure the fight takes place exactly where he wants it to. No matter where the fight goes, Floyd doesn't take much punishment. Sure, Floyd took shots from Cotto and had his nose bloodied, but he's 36 and probably losing the world-class reflexes. Broner, who is in his athletic prime on the other hand, gets tagged by some limited offensive fighters since he stands right in front of them. Part of this problem, which can absolutely be corrected, is arrogance. Broner doesn't think anyone he's fought can hurt him. So far, he's been correct. As he moves up in weight, that will undoubtedly change. His defensive complacency will be what separates him from being on top of the sport.

Directly related to lacking proper foot movement, Broner also doesn't have a good sense of flow between offense and defense like Mayweather. Broner can counter well, but only because his hand speed is typically far superior to his opposition. Conversely, Mayweather lands counters at will because he instinctively transitions between defense and offense fluidly, slipping punches and firing back with his own. Broner simply waits until his opponent is done throwing, and then throws his own punches. It's the reason Daniel Ponce De Leon was able to stifle Broner's attack (in spurts) by implementing an awkward, varied fight pace to keep the youngster guessing.

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Difference 3: The Moneymaker

While people often watch Floyd fight because they want to see him lose, it's nothing compared to what Broner makes people feel. I watched his knockout of Gavin Rees with my girlfriend, who admittedly is not a boxing fan. As he made his entrance – er, train wreck—to the ring, she was so disgusted that all she wanted was “for that guy to smash his face in.” While it seems like an irrelevant point to the novice fan, that's not the case. There's plenty of outstanding boxers right now, and plenty of entertaining ones. But there's VERY few that have mass appeal. Floyd, for better or worse, has that mass appeal. Broner is genuinely disliked, and that's a really big deal.

There's a reason Gennady Golovkin can't land a Sergio Martinez fight, but Julio Cesar Chavez, Jr. did. It's the same reason Andre Ward isn't known by the masses (despite being the best prizefighter on the planet by my estimation). You have to be popular, and you have to appeal to the casual fan/non-fan to sell fights. If a fighter is not marketed well (and in Floyd's case he largely marketed himself well), they will never reach the pinnacle of the sport. If anything has been made clear over the years, it's that boxing is a business first and foremost, and if you can't draw big \$\$, you can't draw the exposure/fights needed to become a superstar. I just don't see Broner doing enough in the ring to overcome his behavior until he matures. Adrien Broner simply cannot carry a network/PPV franchise at this point. What he has working for him is that he's a pretty exciting fighter to watch (due to his knack for the finish, and suspect defense) and time is on his side.

As far as Broner's behavior, I know it's a charade. I do. I also know he's a kid in a young adult's body, but that doesn't excuse his complete lack of class. I hope he has a long, successful career, but I hope he learns some lessons that only can be learned out of the ring.

In the meantime, he'll be stepping up in weight (two classes to welterweight) to challenge Paulie Malignaggi on Saturday, a move signaling his desire to get involved with the biggest \$\$ fights in the most competitive division in boxing (and also lay the foundation for a potential “passing of the torch” fight vs. Mayweather in a few years). The biggest question when guys move up in weight is how they'll deal with bigger power/punchers, but Malignaggi poses no real threat with his power. What Malignaggi brings to the table is heart, determination, slick boxing knowhow, and experience.

(Revisit his loss to Miguel Cotto here where he battled through extreme punishment and adversity to make it a close fight against an elite fighter)

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{youtube}uSty5VCZy5o{/youtube}

The only ways for Paulie to win this fight are:

1) Literally box circles around Broner. Broner tends to get a bit flat-footed in the center of the ring, so if Paulie can stick a few quick shots and circle away from the returning punches from Broner, he could frustrate Broner into getting wild. To do this for 12 rounds, he'll need to mix it up by circling both right and also left into Broner's dangerous right hand.

2) Make this a Bernard Hopkins-style fight. Paulie will need to get dirty in this one. He needs to get off first, then hold, headbutt, and just generally muddy this fight up. Fighting on an even playing field puts him at a disadvantage since Broner is faster, younger, and has more pop. Let's not forget that Ricky Hatton and Amir Khan both outboxed and really dominated Paulie, so he needs to dig into his whole bag of tricks to keep his belt.

3) Land a hard, stiff jab all night long. If Paulie uses his jab as a range-finder, it will be counter-productive and lead to a short night of work for Broner. Conversely, if Paulie can use his jab as an effective punch to keep Broner off balance, he can dictate the pace of the fight and at least partially offset Broner's power.

4) Land a haymaker and knock the over-confident Broner out. Yeah, you're right, not going to happen.

At the end of the day, Paulie Malignaggi from 2008 gives Broner fits and probably ekes out a close decision. However, he's really slowed down the last year or two (I mean, Pablo Cesar Cano gave him a real struggle), and I just don't see him beating Broner. Broner should win this with a TKO in round 9 when Malignaggi's corner stops the violence. Make no mistake, I'm rooting hard for Paulie. I just don't see it ending well for him.

Assuming he's victorious, what would a win over a slightly faded Malignaggi prove about

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Broner? Not much. My biggest question on Broner is how he responds to adversity, when he really gets tagged on the chin. Paulie Malignaggi is a very skilled, slick boxer, but he'd never be confused with a chin-checker. Here's the fights I'm hoping to see in Broner's immediate future as we see what type of fighter he really is:

Vs. Matthyse- This has absolute fireworks written all over it. I mean a war. Matthyse is one of those guys you can't just take shots from. Broner is susceptible to eating clean shots, and he wouldn't get away with that against the Argentine. I would take Matthyse by KO early.

Vs. Brandon Rios- While Rios doesn't have the power of Matthyse, he has the style to give Broner hell. I would take Broner via a late TKO, but I sure wouldn't bet on it.

Vs. Canelo- Canelo may just be too large to ever fight Broner, but as two of the brightest young stars in boxing, they may be on a collision course if Golden Boy has anything to say about it. Canelo would overwhelm Broner with power punches, forcing a late stoppage.

Vs. Marquez- This is something of a dream fight for me... I see a grueling battle, with Marquez losing a very close decision. But this would be a wild encounter with multiple knockdowns for both fighters.

Vs. Amir Khan- What Amir Khan lacks in ability to take a punch, he largely makes up for it with some of the best offense in the sport today. He would undoubtedly connect with some serious punches on Broner. However, if Broner can withstand the shots, like Danny Garcia did, he'd likely turn Khan's lights out like Garcia did, too.

Vs. Robert Guerrero- Before the Mayweather fight, I would have said that Robert bullies him to a UD. After seeing how easily Floyd shut him down with right hands, I see the same outcome against Broner. Wouldn't be surprised if this was actually the next fight for Broner after he dispatches Malignaggi.

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Carmine Cas says:

Broner said he'd fight Guerrero at 154 when they met at some press tour. Paulie might have enough in the tank to eek this one out. I agree with all four points for Paulie, his jab if used offensively will serve him well, but he's got to stay away from the straight right and upper cut. The left jab works well against the orthodox Philly shell, Rees even tagged Broner in the first two rounds (although it looked like Broner wasn't taking the fight seriously at first) Brandon Rios would be eating those all night, I'd love to see Broner fight Zab, that would be a great fight.

amayseng says:

The ghost walks Broner down and may stop him

Broner way too short to be effective.

Broner has skills but hasn't applied them to serious competition.

And in all honesty should have 2 legit clear cut losses on his record

amayseng says:

Don't be fooled by Broner a wanna be Floyd defense.

Broner isn't half the fighter Floyd is.

He would have his hands full with the ghost.

Raiders says:

The twitter talk was ridiculous, he has the biggest following of any American behind Mayweather, this had no place in the article, anyway great article. I don't get the hate for Broner, the guys I hate are the ones who don't love the sport like Mikey or Victor. Broner looks like he is having fun, I didn't grow up loving Mayweather Broner did. I don't think Broner a bad guy. The think about Broner is he is so over hyped by casuals that hardcore fans tear him down, Broner doesn't have great footwork and he doesn't compare to Floyd. Broner does have talent, he will come in at 160 so he's mastered the weight his first try, Broner is not getting exposed he will likely end up a 5 division champion and he doesn't enter his prime for 2 years, that's 6 matches. I think people need to accept Broner.

Radam G says:

Broner made end up being a five-division champ, but he will be exposed during that time. He has so unforgivable flaws. Three of the biggest ones are: 1. Fighting with his mouth open. [A broken jaw is a coming.] 2. Keeping his chin straight-up in the heavens. [A kayo to the throat and/or chin is a coming.] 3. His legs are spreaded to fall apart. [A beating from a fancy dancer

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and/or a pressure in-fighter slugger is a coming.] Holla!