



On October 2, 2013, Edwin Rodriguez enrolled in the Voluntary Anti-Doping Agency's 24-7-365 testing program. That means VADA can demand blood and urine samples from Rodriguez without notice anytime anywhere. In so doing, Edwin followed the lead of Nonito Donaire, who announced in early-2012 that he was unilaterally subjecting himself to year-round PED testing by VADA.

Boxing has a serious PED problem. Under the best of circumstances, trying to catch drug cheats is like designing anti-virus computer software. The cheats are always finding new ways to thwart the system.

In boxing, the system is easy to beat. Most states have drug-testing programs that a high school student could circumvent. Testing on fight night or testing once a fight has been announced is better than no testing, but it's not enough. A fighter can use PEDs between fights and cycle off when his next fight is signed.

The Damocles Sword of testing by a qualified testing agency 24-7-365 is essential if boxing is to curtail PED use. But with rare exceptions, this testing hasn't been implemented.

Indeed, one might posit that Rodriguez and Donaire (*pictured above, in Chris Farina-Top Rank photo*) have put themselves at a competitive disadvantage. Their upcoming opponents have steered clear of 24-7-365 PED testing. That doesn't mean their opponents are dirty. But it doesn't inspire confidence that Edwin and Nonito will be in the ring against clean opposition either.

Jim Lampley was once reluctant to call for stringent measures to curtail the use of performance enhancing drugs in boxing. That changed on December 8, 2012, when Manny Pacquiao was brutally knocked out by Juan Manuel Marquez.

Written by Thomas Hauser
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“I saw Manny Pacquiao lying face-down on the canvas in front of me,” Lampley recalls. “I thought he might be dead. That imbued me with a sense of urgency on this issue.”

One week later, on the December 15th edition of *The Fight Game*, Lampley designated Donaire as *TFG*'s “Fighter of the Year.”

“He committed to random drug testing, 24-7-365 whether he is scheduled to fight or not,” Lampley explained to viewers. “At a moment when, elsewhere in the sport, you can find instances of star fighters who are testing positive for performance enhancing drugs, test results which have allegedly been ignored or suppressed in favor of unobstructed commerce, enforcement efforts which get lost or fall short due to improper scheduling, inadequate testing methods, and bureaucratic incompetence; if you are looking for the ray of hope, the light in the forest, his name is Nonito Donaire.”

On the same telecast, Lampley honored VADA president Margaret Goodman. After referencing VADA's “state of the art procedures” and “prominent busts” of two elite fighters (Lamont Peterson and Andre Berto), Lampley declared, “It took VADA and Margaret Goodman two fights to establish the will to enforce standards which might help to reverse what many observers now see as an onrushing tide of performance enhancing drugs in boxing. For making her point forcefully, fearlessly, and immediately, Dr. Margaret Goodman is the ‘*TFG* Person of the Year.’”

One can argue that it's the responsibility of state athletic commissions, legislators, and promoters to help rid boxing of PEDs. But most of all, it's the responsibility of THE FIGHTERS and their camps. The fighters are the ones who are at greatest risk.

A fatality would be the most stark evidence of the crisis. But the dangers go far beyond a handful of deaths. Twenty years from now, an entire generation of fighters will have brain damage from having been hit in the head harder than would have been the case without PED use by their opponents.

Thus, it's worth focusing on Edwin Rodriguez and the laudable commitment to 24-7-365 VADA testing that he recently made.

In August of this year, Rodriguez signed with manager Al Haymon. At least three of Haymon's fighters (Andre Berto, Antonio Tarver, and J'Leon Love) have tested positive for PEDs in the past.

Another Haymon fighter (Peter Quillin) was enrolled in a USADA testing program prior to his June 2, 2012, fight against Winky Wright. Then, after blood and urine samples were taken from both fighters, Wright was told that the testing had been abandoned and the samples were destroyed.

Haymon also represents Adrien Broner.

Broner, Antonio DeMarco, Golden Boy (Broner's promoter), and the United States Anti-Doping Agency signed a contract for USADA testing prior to the November 17, 2012, Broner-DeMarco fight. But according to DeMarco, he wasn't tested by USADA for that bout, nor was Broner.

Then, on June 22, 2013, Broner fought Paulie Malignaggi.

"I wanted VADA testing," Malignaggi recalls. "And I was told, 'No, we won't do VADA. If you insist on VADA, there won't be a fight.' Finally, I said, 'F--- it. I'm getting seven figures. I'll go ahead and fight.' Would I have been more confident that Broner was clean if there had been VADA testing? Absolutely."

Haymon's flagship fighter, of course, is Floyd Mayweather.

On June 24, 2013, at a media sitdown before the kick-off press conference for Mayweather vs. Canelo Alvarez, Leonard Ellerbe (CEO of Mayweather Promotions) told reporters, "We've put in place a mechanism where all Mayweather Promotions fighters will do mandatory blood and urine testing 365-24-7 by USADA."

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USADA declined a request from this writer for comment on the truth of Ellerbe's contention. Al Haymon also declined comment for this article. And questions remain regarding the issue of whether or not, several years ago, Mayweather "A" samples tested positive on three occasions.

Referencing that issue, Dan Rafael of ESPN.com stated during a November 21, 2012, online chat, "I need to see proof before I accuse somebody of something so serious. What is fact, however, is that the settlement in the Pacquiao-Mayweather lawsuit happened after the Pacquiao camp tried to get Mayweather's USADA testing records. So maybe where there is smoke there is fire."

So here's a suggestion. Why doesn't Floyd Mayweather enroll in VADA's 24-7-365 program? And let him state publicly, "Any fighter who wants to be eligible to fight me must enroll in VADA's 24-7-365 program NOW."

And let's take it a step further. In addition to Mayweather, Broner, Quillin, Berto, and Love, Al Haymon currently represents Danny Garcia, Devon Alexander, Lucas Matthyse, Marcos Maidana, Leo Santa Cruz, Keith Thurman, Austin Trout, Omar Figueroa, Gary Russell Jr, Sakio Bika, Josesito Lopez, Erislandy Lara, Shawn Porter, Errol Spence, Chris Arreola, Seth Mitchell, and Deontay Wilder.

Let's assume that all of these fighters are clean. Let them all enter a 24-7-365 VADA testing program. I can't speak for anyone else. But that would certainly make a believer out of me.

Al and Floyd have enough money to fund it.

It's easy to talk the talk. Let's see who walks the walk.

Let's also remember the thoughts of Jim Lampley, who has warned, "Whatever is the worst thing that can happen as the result of boxers employing modern medical science to strengthen their bodies, it hasn't happened yet. But if nothing is done to further strengthen testing standards and applications, it surely will. And when it does, we won't be complaining anymore that boxing can't find its way into mainstream media. We'll be there in a big way, and in no way

to our credit.”

Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thausen@rcn.com. His most recent book (*Straight Writes and Jabs: An Inside Look at Another Year in Boxing*) has just been published by the University of Arkansas Press.

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Radam G says:

Nice piece! Nice call out. But these posers are dirty and will never holla at you-cannot-pay-off VADA. The Shadow Al Haymon got vapors around his dirty-arse pugilists. And 95 percent of the time, he can make positive tests disappear using jive-arse USADA. Holla!

james pena says:

VADA is truly done for the sport >> anyone who thinks marquez build is normal common guys berto before and NOW two complete diffrent fighters if you remember mosley knocking everyone out after he got caught no more ko power VADA is the way to go and thats just the FACTs mma or boxing

Carmine Cas says:

Very nice article, this only strengthens the reason as to why boxing needs to be centralized.

Hop says:

This is the best and most informative article I have ever read on the subject of boxing and PEDs. Period.

amayseng says:

Excellent article yet disturbing. Look at how many Haymon fighters have tested dirty.

The speculation that Floyd had 3 dirty tests as well is quite troubling.

These guys are cheating to hit another human being in the head with more force than naturally dangerous to begin with.

What happens when there IS a fatality and the fighter who causes it tests positive for PEDS and roids?

Would that not be a Felonious assault?

Where there be charges filed?

stormcentre says:

Good article.

No surprises for me though.

IMO there is no way Floyd is 100% clean either. Not when he makes that much money and all the rules. In fact anyone that was would use VADA to emphasise it.

Floyd could afford to fund the latest PED design, keep it for himself, use it, contract to test for everything else, make opponents sign for the testing, and both fight jacked whilst advertising stringent testing takes place and claim it's OK to avoid Pacquiao because he doesn't agree to PED testing.

Ahh the hypocrisy (possibly) knows no boundaries.

The amount of boxers that, at least, cycle "on" whilst out of a testing risk-window and/or contracted fight; would be staggering.

We can only wonder why SOG was pissedoff that Edwin announced his VADA status. Particularly given Ward has had a long layoff.

I'm not saying Ward is dirty, but the temptation to use whilst in recovery mode and when not in (fight) contract must be enormous

Radam G says:

Storm, SOG has been under medical-approved roids for his belonged rehabbing of his shoulder surgery. Other than that SOG is as clean as a whistle. Holla!

amayseng says:

RG which exact "medical approved roids" are we talking about?

amayseng says:

Why we are at it, the K brothers need tested as much as anyone. VK has admitted and tested positive for roids in the past.

WLAD looks ridiculous at this late age.

I am not hating, but those two come to mind quickly when thinking of PEDS

Radam G says:

Medical info is covered by the Privacy Act, and since I have next of kins working with SOG, I won't go there. Oh, yea! The K-bros/docs use approved roids and PEDs. So they aren't cheats. They are aight! Holla!

amayseng says:

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Fair enough.

Being in the medical field I expected this, I was not sure if there was something on the streets whirling about.

stormcentre says:

[QUOTE=Radam G;38061]Storm, SOG has been under medical-approved roids for his belonged rehabbing of his shoulder surgery. Other than that SOG is as clean as a whistle. Holla![/QUOTE]

Yes RG I was aware he may be. Thanks for pointing that out though.

stormcentre says:

[QUOTE=amayseng;38064]Why we are at it, the K brothers need tested as much as anyone. VK has admitted and tested positive for roids in the past.

WLAD looks ridiculous at this late age.

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I agree. WK is about as permanently jacked (whilst training or fighting; not sure about the rest) as you can be.

I have heard some pretty interesting stories about what's stipulated to be tested and what's not, in his "opponent" contracts.

Still, this is boxing now.

stormcentre says:

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So . . . RG . . . since you're close to the action with Ward. . . what's your view on how he will fare with;

1) Rodriguez.

2) Golovkin.

I really like Ward, think he has achieved (and deserves) a lot, and he is one of my favourite fighters. He also has a style that will cause a lot of guys trouble.

But he didn't look too comfortable around GGG in the presser that was shown on BS.

Your thoughts?

dino da vinci says:

[QUOTE=stormcentre;38088]So . . . RG . . . since you're close to the action with Ward. . . what's your view on how he will fare with;

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As most P4P lists show him in the number two slot, I believe he finds his way past both men. As for the only one penciled in in front of him, do to time and size they'll never meet. Nothing short of a dream fight if SOG agrees to meet GGG in the squared circle. I lean towards the halo in that one.

stormcentre says:

Fair and good comments DDV.

If Ward has truly recovered he should beat Rodriguez. With GGG I think Ward has the style, skills and perhaps the experience to beat Golovkin, but I think that one will come down to how much either man's style can close the other's down and dominate, as they both have obvious ways to win. Perhaps then I am saying it will come down to KO power, punch resistance and sheer determination, and on those fronts;

KO power; must go to 3G. But Ward always finds a way to land combinations too.

Punch resistance; maybe lean towards Ward. But then neither guy gets hit that much and I haven't seen GGG hit hard yet by someone that is not intimidated and unable to follow up. 3G's next fight will probably tell. Actually, both guy's next fight will tell a lot.

Determination; Wow, both have it in spades.

amayseng says:

GGG has taken some flush and decent shots. Rosado sat down a few times and tee'd off and the baby faced assassin ate them, smiled and kept coming.

I think GGG vs Ward is a toss up. Two of the best in boxing at this point with tremendous skill and boxing ability.

stormcentre says:

Yes, you're right. Rosado did hit him a few times and 3G just knew it meant nothing to the fact he was going to stop Rosado.

But mostly Rosado was retreating and/or not really attacking with full force; from what I remember.

amayseng says:

he was on the retreat a lot because ggg broke him down. rosado is a good fighter and he did sit down a few times on ggg.

there is no way i could predict it. both men are fantastic at implementing their game plans and negating their opponents.

i would be happy to watch it though with no expectations either way

Radam G says:

SOG beats both, Strom. Easy work. Holla!

stormcentre says:

“Both men are fantastic at implementing their game plans and negating their opponents”.
Agreed, Amayseng, they both are.

stormcentre says:

[QUOTE=Radam G;38148]SOG beats both, Strom. Easy work. Holla![/QUOTE]

Yes I thought that too.

However, one of my hesitations is with whether Ward can avoid 3G's power and if Ward's game plan changes and becomes vulnerable, in the event he doesn't avoid it.

The flipside is, of course, whether Golovkin can adapt to Ward's fluid, fast, and sometimes broken rythm style of fighting. I say that as 3G's game plan can be heavily counter-punching centric and Ward's style and movement could make that hard. And, as we know Ward's determination is second to none, if he senses Golovkin is plodding around, looking for countering opportunities and confused about how his game-plan hasn't gained traction; he will capitalise.

amayseng says:

i dont ever see ggg not focused at the task at hand. his movement is constant and his defense to offense transition and vice versa is instantaneous.

if they fight i think it will be as close to a draw as possible. gggs amateur pedigree and experience has him beyond prepared for any and everything.

its hard to play it out as both combatants are excellent. i put them both in the top five right now.