

The Year in Boxing, Part 1

Written by Michael Woods
Monday, 30 December 2013 11:49



The year in boxing 2013 started out in January in a 'meh' fashion.

Andre Ward was supposed to steamroll Kelly Pavlik but hurt his shoulder and that bout was scrapped, Shane Mosley un-retired and was rumored to be fighting Paul Malignaggi, the Zou Shiming phenomenon was kicking off, Golden Boy and Top Rank sparred over a proposed Abner Mares-Nonito Donaire rumble, blah blah blah.

It was as if the sport just said to hell with it, it is what it is, I'm not even bothering with resolutions this year, I'm just skipping straight to giving up. Ok, ok, maybe I'm overstating the case, but for sure the month of **January** was no harbinger of the multiple blessings the sport graced us with in a zesty 2013.

The month did give us some of those theater of the unexpected moments which makes being a fightwriter so rewarding, such as Kelly Pavlik retiring to become a Facebook philosopher.

The sports' two lead dogs, Floyd Mayweather and Manny Pacquiao, stayed relevant with discussions about their nexts, with Floyd flirting with Robert Guerrero and Canelo Alvarez and Devon Alexander and Manny setting up for a fifth tangle with Juan Manuel Marquez, as per his promoter Bob Arum. We know that didn't come off, and that Manny instead shrugged off the Romney Jinx, which bedeviled him when the private equity king/taker-hater sat ringside for the fourth Pacman-Marquez tangle, and had his jaw dropped when Manny got dropped and stopped.

It wasn't a memorable January, but boxing usually does take a bit of time to ramp up for the

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new year; that's an earned right, as there is no off season for practitioners and consumers of the sweet science.

February started off with another look at the possible baton-carrier for the sport, Adrien Broner. "Mr. HBO" would be tested by Brit Gavin Rees (37-1-1) in Atlantic City. Broner was of course fully charged with optimism before the Rees fight, saying, "This is going to be a fun year for me." Er, there was tons of fun, and also the opposite of that for the cocky Cincinnati boxer. He solved Rees with ease but stiffer tests wouldn't be so easy to navigate later.

A dark note was struck when 25-year-old Omar Henry, a junior middleweight prospect, died from gallbladder cancer. His fanbase grew as people rooted for the kid to KO cancer. On Jan. 9, he wrote on his Facebook page: *"I got exactly less than 1 month left until my 26th birthday, February 8. Hopefully I live to see it."* He didn't, sadly, and ends his campaign with a 12-0-1 mark.

Mayweather dropped word that made folks who enjoy the familial dysfunction of the Mayweather crew chagrined, alerting us that he and his dad were back working together for Floyd's May 4 date. That announcement paled in comparison to the bombshell which dropped Feb. 19, when Showtime told us they'd signed Floyd to a six-fight deal. HBO said, "We made an aggressive and responsible pay-per-view offer. Now we move on. We are focused on the best boxing franchise in the television business. We are proud of the roster of superstar fighters and emerging stars who are scheduled to appear on the multiple HBO television platforms this year."

Much digital ink was spilled speculating about just how rich Floyd's deal was, how much (if any) money Showtime lost on the first fights, and just what sort of numbers Floyd did on PPV for the remainder of the year, and much of that left us hoping for a new boxing reality show, featuring execs being hooked up to polygraphs, and being forced to share PPV numbers.

Mayweather first fought on HBO on Sept. 6, 1997, against Louie Leija, on "Boxing After Dark." That relationship was by no means a smooth one all the way through. Back in 1999, Mayweather didn't care for a renewal offer, a seven fight deal which he termed a "slave contract." But that speedbump got smoothed over...yet of course new ones erupted. The ripples from the Floyd-to-Showtime arrangement are of course still being absorbed today.

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The first big bout in **March** featured the sports' ageless wonder, 175 pound ace Bernard Hopkins, proving yet again that to bet against him is a fool's errand. He showed Tavoris Cloud over 12 rounds at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn that his brand of ring generalship is a variety which would stand out in any era. At 48 years old, he was still a credit to what a life of clean living could do for a guy. The win left me wondering what Hopkins could do against Andre Ward, the king at 168 pounds. The Philly boxer didn't seem open to it, but Ward did, telling me that the cash stash from that tussle would have to be overwhelming for him to agree to it. Not sure I ever quite mastered the public offerings as to why that bout wouldn't come off, what with Hopkins terming Ward a "protege," but hey, deciphering Hopkins' zig-zaggy logic can be half the fun in covering him.

But after seeing Hopkins eat more clean shots than he would've two years ago, against Karo Murat, methinks he knows what he's capable of, and what is a bridge too far, and that Ward is in a category with Sergey Kovalev, as boxers better left to the kiddie corps to deal with. But that's for him to answer, or evade, in the end...

March 18 saw a shift in the sport of massive proportions, with HBO flipping the bird at Golden Boy, announcing they wouldn't buy bouts from that entity. "In order to achieve our goal of the best fighters in the most compelling matchups we've decided to focus our efforts and resources on those strategic relationships where we better share common goals and business philosophies," said Ken Hershman, president of HBO sports. The name "Al Haymon" wasn't mentioned, but loomed XL in the decision, with HBO being beyond-irked that athletes they'd groomed for stardom being escorted over to Showtime to do their business. Moving forward, we'd be left to wonder who'd be the Reagan, who'd be the Gorbachev, to bring warring parties to the table, and propel the thawing process to end boxings' Cold War.

Here is my analysis of the Cold War, from a March 20 column:

My take: That will remain to be seen. Let's check back in three, six, 12 months. Maybe it is better that things are out in the open, that HBO forced all cards to be put on the table. This is a new age of transparency, after all. If I write an article, and screw up a fact, or my thesis sucks, you guys will call me on it in the comment section. The interactivity forces the content provider to up their game, in theory, anyway. Now everyone knows who is aligned with who, and that makes the scorecards easier to fill out. As always, I ask for pick 'em fights, the best fighting the best. I know I won't always get that, because these guys have to balance, as cunning capitalists, risk vs. reward, and building up attractions incrementally. I frankly think the whole lot of them can do better at doing that, across the board. As always, however, I remain optimistic, because I know there is no shortage of athletes ready, willing and able to showcase what you saw Saturday in the Provodnikov-Bradley fight: will, skill and drama, round after round.

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That rupture didn't mean we didn't appreciate the thrilling March 16 rumble between Friday Night Fights graduate Ruslan Provodnikov, who very nearly stopped the Cali-based boxer who'd been dismayed to be the recipient of death threats from a couple knuckleheads after "defeating" Manny Pacquiao in 2012. Bradley's rep reached a new level, as he admitted post-fight that he suffered a concussion during the firefight, with fight fans finally giving in, and giving the kid a break. 2013 was his breakthrough year, all can agree.

Robert Guerrero's rep took a turn when he pulled the knucklehead move of the year--yes, there were as always plenty of contenders--when he was busted for taking a gun into an NYC airport, enroute to Vegas to train to fight Mayweather. This development came after Guerrero shared his faith on "The 700 Club," hosted by [homophobe Pat Robertson](#). "The Ghost" told one and all that God would be in his corner come fight night, and reward his humility against the comparatively faithless Mayweather, but yet again, we all received proof that the Almighty doesn't engage in fight fixing.

TMZ-type antics got shoved to the side when Mike Alvarado and Brandon Rios gave fight fans a thriller in their rematch, with the Colorado-based fighter getting a UD five months after the two men squared off and Rios exited with his hand raised. Legs proved the difference here, with Alvie using smart and constant movement to befuddle Rios. Think maybe Freddie Roach studied that tape one or twenty times?

Speaking of befuddling; the Rigolution sprouted on April 13, when the 12-0 Cuban Guillermo Rigondeaux beat 2012 Boxing Writers Association Fighter of the Year Nonito Donaire in NY. The crowd booed, sending a message that they wanted more O from the oft-cautious Rigo, but most all had to tip their cap to the man who was lauded by Donaire, a pound for pound ace, for his "beautiful boxing." That it was; Donaire slipped to 31-2 after landing just 82 punches.

Another boxer who elevated themselves to another plane this year was Danny Garcia. He beat 35-year-old Zab Judah on April 27, earning himself a few more fans who liked the way he dealt with the crafty Judah. Meanwhile, Amir Khan's Achilles remained in place, as the Brit hit the deck in round four against past-his-prime vet Julio Diaz enroute to a UD12 win in England on April 27.

It was a solid start to the new year, this first quarter, with two fight of the year level rumbles unfolding for our viewing pleasure, and those of us enjoying the political hijinks getting much to chew on, with the HBO-Golden Boy rupture to examine.

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Radam G says:

The fight that has gone under the radar is that everybodee and dey momma have been at hollering Editor Mike to handle the "Quotes of Notes" session. Wow! There hasn't been a change or an update for a bit.

Is Editor tired of our §**±! Everybodee and dey momma and two of dey fat cousins wanna be a HIT! Hehehe! Holla!

The Shadow says:

Radam, what is this "Quotes of Notes" you speak of?

Radam G says:

It is catching-and-standout quotes from TSS Readers. They are near the bottom of TSS's none-log-in page. Just hit TheSweetscience.com and holla at it. Holla!

The Shadow says:

Really? I'll check it out! The best quote, IMO, is when I quoted you in my story on Mayweather-Canelo LOL!

The Shadow says:

Just to remind you of the gems you hollered in my feature:

[B]On the Mayweather massacre[/B][I]

"I told everybody and dey momma that Money May, Uncle Roger May and Pops Joy May would all-day, jab-keep-at-bay, and incidental-elbow-slay the red-headed hype Canelo A." [/I]

Never at loss for words unless cameras are in his face, RG continued, [I]"You know me! I'm down with da O-P-P! Hehehehe! But pressure against Money May is high blood pressure to everybody and dey momma and especially Canelo's momma! Hehehehehe! [/I][I]

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"As I predicted a long time ago, pressure make da coal go BLING BLING and make da pull counter missile go ZING ZING while the bellkeeper goes DING DING!"[/I]

[B]RG on Canelo's momma and career advice[/B]

[I]"First of all, she needs to go holla at the ringside physician, some whammy-flashing magician and hire a dietician for her fat arse son.

"Then tell the red-headed hype to get some new trainers and run as far away from the Money Train as he can and feast on his brother Justin May in May instead. That's a more fair fight. Holla!"[/I]

RG - a brilliant man of great insights.

Radam G says:

Maybe Editor Mike is waiting until next year to fire it back up. Holla!

amayseng says:

I wouldnt say Pat Robertson is a "homophobe" as much as i would say misguided and old. yes old.

old people are stuck in their thinking from when they grew up, so the 40's was much different than today.

the best of this year is Adrian Broner getting his cocky, arrogant, disturbing *** handed to him.

I use to smash dudes like this on the football, baseball and basketball court/fields. props to Madaina

for taking care of this negative persona and putting balance back into the world of boxing.

Looking forward to seeing the Ghost blast him out next, but AB wont take that fight. he knows better.

Radam G says:

Stupid, bull-headed "old people are stuck in their thinking from when (the way) they grew up," A-seng. They simply hate change because of control and being top dawgs.

Intelligent none bull-headed old people change with what is best and effective every day of the

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week and 50 times on Sunday. And they are not controlling and threatened by youth.

Tio Mamoy bytches about changes, but then beat all the five-to-10 kids at playstation. He talk jive about thumbless glove, but uses them over the old, loose-thumb ones when he is sparring with "green-@ss" 70-and-80 year-olds.

Tia Minnie complains about how nowadays "gals" fast cook everything. But she will holla at her microwave at the drop of a hat. And she washes all of her clothes, except her "undies" in the washing machine. But she brags her ancient arse off how handwashing is better.

BTW, AB won't take dangerous fights anymore because he has been reared in by da know something. He will now start playing the Money May's optical illusions for real now.

Money May has mastered fighting hyper-up as tough easy arses, and convincing the inattention blind that he is fighting deadly, dangerous BEASTs! Something that he will never do until a BEAST is wounded and near finish. This is why he will not fight Da Manny. He knows that Da Manny played a bit of possum against Bam Bam.

If the fight would've been close, and Da Manny would've struggled, Money May would be dancing with him in May.

I love me some Money May, because he knows how to fool and blind many of the so-called wisest brains in da game. And the strongest key of boksing is mastering optical illusions of the tricks of the trade. Holla!

Radam G says:

And going to bank to deposit that BIG purse that you got outta of those over-paying suckas "born every minute." Holla!