Written by Eric Raskin
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*Best line of the night went to Detloff, from Editor Mike's point of view. EM's running to his DVR now, to see if maybe it was a ladybug after all...(Hogan Photos)*As I stated the first time I wrote a pay-per-view running diary, I freely admit to stealing the running diary concept from Bill Simmons, who freely admits to stealing it from Norman Chad. Interestingly, a couple of months ago, I had the pleasure of spending about 90 minutes on the phone with Mr. Chad himself and mentioned that I had committed Grand Theft Column Device, and he gave me his blessing, noting that pay-per-view boxing (or closed circuit, back when he first started doing it) remains the ultimate running-diary material. So there you have it, the Godfather of the Running Diary told me to have fun with it and didn't even ask me to kiss his ring. I've never felt better about my creative thievery.

The Ring magazine Editor-in-Chief Nigel Collins' stately manor played home to this past Saturday night's festivities, and putting a twist on the formula, this supersized night of boxing offered more than just a pay-per-view event to write about. We had both a Showtime pay-per-view and an HBO broadcast, so we watched the Miguel Cotto vs. Ricardo Mayorga PPV in its entirety, then fired up the DVR for the Sergio Martinez-Sergiy Dzinziruk show.

For me, a guy whose 17-month-old son acts as an alarm clock every day at about 4 a.m., a guy who struggles to stay awake after 8 p.m. even on the rare occasions when he's well-rested, a carefully crafted plan was required. I went with a two-pronged attack: (1) secure a two-hour mid-day nap, the sort of nap I practically majored in during my four years of college but now squeeze in maybe once every eight months; (2) load up on coffee after said nap. If I didn't come away with the caffeine shakes and sweats, I simply wasn't doing my job.

As it turned out, my prep was half successful. After maybe 15 minutes of napping, my body clock shouted "You don't do this anymore!" and started openly laughing at me. But I did have a cup of coffee with dinner and picked up a frappuccino on my way to the Collins abode. So I figured to at least keep my eyes open until 10:30 or so.

When I arrived at Nigel's house, The Ring Contributing Editor and Reading Eagle writer Don Stewart was already there, as was veteran boxing writer Jeff Jowett, one of the true characters of press row. (If you're ever at a fight card and hear someone yell, "Stop the fight!" when the first punch of the first four-rounder lands, that's Jeff.) We were still waiting on my Ring Theory broadcast partner Bill Dettloff to arrive, but before he showed up, that little pay-per-view distribution legality warning started scrolling across the screen and it was running-diary time …

9:03 p.m.: We get our first glance at Steve Albert in a tux, and I must admit, it's nice to see Showtime back in the pay-per-view game—and they rolled out an all-star broadcast crew of Albert, Al Bernstein, and Antonio Tarver. Actually, any combination Showtime rolls out that doesn't involve Gus Johnson is an all-star broadcast crew. Thank you, NCAA conference championship weekend, for otherwise occupying Gus' time.

9:10: As we wait for the first bout (Miguel Vazquez vs. Lenny Zappavigna) to begin, interesting topics of conversation include a poodle Nigel once knew that was smart enough to fake a limp so people would carry him around, the 1987 NFL strike, and the fact that the bottom inch and a half of Nigel's plasma TV has been lost to "screen burn." Then we shift our focus to the broadcast when Nigel refers to the thing on the back of Zappa's ponytail as a "teabag." (And if I know this crew of filthy minds, it won't be the last "teabag" reference of the evening.)

9:12: Bill arrives, marking his earliest late arrival in PPV running diary history. The gang is all here.

9:16: Nigel: "Hey, Roy Jones hasn't mentioned God yet!" Me: "That's because it's Antonio Tarver."

9:21: Anyone else think Vazquez looks like he could be the third Ruelas brother?

9:24: Albert goes into a between-rounds promo for the Manny Pacquiao-Shane Mosley PPV fight by calling it "the Fight of the Year." We unanimously agree that such a tag should only be applied after the fight, and at the very least should be applied to fights where both combatants have a chance at winning. The Money Maker of the Year? Possibly. The Fight of the Year? Not likely.

9:31: Vazquez is pulling out to a lead behind a clever jab and good movement, Zappa is cut on the right eye, and I just finished chugging my frappuccino and let out a big yawn anyway. I vote for pay-per-views to start at 9 a.m. Eastern time from now on.

9:35: Good observation from Nigel: "Vazquez is one of those guys that you can't figure out how he's winning, but he is. He's like a junk-ball pitcher."

9:38: After one of the commentators notes that he gave a round to Zappa because Lenny seemed to want it more, Jowett gives an impassioned speech about how you score a round based on who fought better, not who tried harder. Meanwhile, somewhere in a living room in California, Tony Crebs is telling the people he's watching the fights with that you score a round based on how you decided to score it before the fight began.

9:47: This is the one fight of the night on which Bill and I disagreed in our "Quick Picks" competition, with me taking Vazquez on points and Bill going with Zappa. Bill admits that his best hope right now is for the judges to blow it. Unfortunately for him, as I just noted, Crebs is not in the building.

9:54: Vazquez is comfortably ahead with two rounds to go, but the press-row scorers have it

absurdly close. I've learned to hate Showtime's press-row scoring innovation because it erodes our ability as journalists to mock inept judges.

9:57: Bill complains that Showtime doesn't seem to be showing the round-card girls at all, and wouldn't you know, about five seconds later, we get a long look at one before round 12. Ask and ye shall receive. (By the way, how pathetic and desperate are us old married guys that we get excited about seeing a chick in a bathing suit?)

10:03: Vazquez wins a comfortable decision. This puts me up by one point in Quick Picks, where I'll remain heading into next weekend since there's no further "swing" potential. Considering it's been about 10 months since the last time I held a lead in this competition, you'd better believe I'm going to do my share of gloating over email this week.

10:06: As Jim Gray interviews Mayorga, we're forced to wonder: Have there ever been two guys on the TV screen at the same time whom such a large percentage of the viewing audience wanted to see get beaten up?

10:13: The Tom Zbikowski-Rich Bryant fight is about to start, marking our second fight in a row featuring a pugilist whose last name starts with "Z," which I assume, without doing any actual research, is some kind of a record. Bryant is from London, Kentucky, which makes him the first ever hybrid British/Midwest tomato can. We also are told by the commentators that Bryant works as a nutritionist. Judging by his physique, he's the "do as I say, not as I do" type.

10:16: About a minute into the fight, Bryant goes down on a delayed reaction from a left to the body. He gets up at the count of eight, leading to this memorable exchange between referee Russell Mora and Bryant: "Do you want to fight?" "No." It's hard to make any decisive judgments about Zbikowski's ability as a boxer from this brief display against a hapless opponent, but my sense is that it's in his best interests for there to be a 2011-2012 NFL season.

10:23: Albert calls Pacquiao-Mosley the "Fight of the Year" for the third time. On a related note, I hope you're enjoying this running diary penned by the Boxing Writer of the Year.

10:24: Bill busts out a spectacular impression of Mosley having a stroke. You kinda had to be there. But just trust me, he nailed it.

10:26: Showtime interviews promoters Don King and Bob Arum, leading Bill to declare, "You both belong in [retirement] homes." Jeff overrules him with, "You both belong in hell." Soon enough, Mr. Jowett, soon enough.

10:28: Pawel Wolak enters to the all-too-familiar strains of AC/DC's "Thunderstruck." Apparently nobody in the audio department at the MGM Grand had Eminem's "Not Afraid" handy.

10:39: Nigel and Jeff tell a story about a fight in which blood was pouring out of the glove of a fighter named Vic Valentino and nobody could figure out where the blood was coming from, and everything came into focus later when Valentino revealed he'd previously cut up his hand in a bar fight. Not to act all superior or anything, but I bet you don't get stories like this at YOUR

pay-per-view party.

10:48: As Wolak and Yuri Foreman are giving us a surprisingly entertaining fight (that is being dominated by the suffocating pressure of underdog Wolak), Bill makes a perfect comparison, saying the fight reminds him of Leo Dorin vs. Paul Spadafora. Come to think of it, Spaddy was studying to be a rabbi too, wasn't he?

10:53: Albert declares Pac-Mosley the Fight of the Year for the fourth time. Don Stewart notes, "If you say it enough, people will believe it."

10:58: As we peek into Foreman's corner after the sixth round, Nigel says, "It looks like Foreman's getting ready to quit," and wouldn't you know, five seconds later ref Kenny Bayless is waving his arms and the fight is over. I'm waiting patiently for Nigel to predict that I'm about to start crapping out hundred-dollar bills.

11:01: Even more surprising than the entertaining nature of the fight and Wolak's upset victory is the fact that Wolak speaks perfect, accent-free English in his postfight interview with Gray. We all just assumed Wolak was going to sound like Andrew Golota, author of the famous quote, "Eat, fight, and go home." Turns out Wolak has lived in New Jersey a lot longer than he lived in Poland.

11:11: Those rooting for the night of boxing to end sooner rather than later (in other words, me) are disappointed to learn this will be a three-national-anthem affair. We pass the time debating what the mole on the breast of the woman singing "The Star-Spangled Banner" is. Guesses include a wart, a melanoma, and a ladybug. Then Bill offers, "It could be my eye burning a hole in her [breast]." (EDITOR NOTE: This line had me laughing out loud. Thanks, Bill.)

11:31: The main event, Cotto vs. Mayorga, is underway! And it only takes 10 seconds before Mayorga receives his first warning for some infraction or another from referee Robert Byrd.

11:41: We're in the third round and there hasn't been a dull moment yet. Mayorga is begging Cotto to follow him into the corner and hit him. Say what you will about Mayorga—his trash talk is tasteless, his punching technique is reminiscent of Willy Waterbug, he loses almost every big fight—but inside the ring, the man is an entertainer.

11:42: Cotto starts boxing on his toes, bouncing around the ring, and using his jab, and when he does this, Mayorga has no chance. However, Cotto hasn't done much of this yet, so the fight has been fairly competitive.

11:47: Mayorga actually drapes his arms over the ropes in the corner to goad Cotto in. Next round, look for him to build a hammock, lay it across the ring ropes, and swing from it while sipping a daiquiri and begging Cotto to come exchange punches.

11:55: Gray asks Mike Tyson during a between-rounds interview whether Mosley can defeat Pacquiao. Tyson answers, "If I had a quarter for every time there's an upset, I'd be a billionaire." Or if you'd, you know, held on to your money, you'd be a billionaire.

12:15 a.m.: In the 12th round of a competitive fight that Cotto is winning clearly, the Puerto Rican lands a huge left hook and Mayorga goes down, complaining of an injury to his left hand. He gets up but asks for the fight to be stopped a few moments later, giving us one of the more bizarre finishes in recent memory.

12:17: Replays provide no evidence of anything happening to Mayorga's hand, leading us to conclude that Cotto hit Mayorga so hard he was completely discombobulated and the communication between his brain and his extremities got a bit short-circuited. We're not entirely sure what to make of it. But overall, we were pleased with the fight, and the card on the whole was solid if not spectacular. If I was actually paying $50 for this thing, I wouldn't feel totally ripped off. (How's that for a ringing endorsement?)

12:34: After a bathroom break, we're firing up the HBO show on Nigel's DVR. Bill reminds me that our "Over/Under" question from the previous week's Ring Theory concerned how many different pronunciations of "Dzinziruk" the HBO broadcast team would collectively use (Bill set the line at three, I took the over), which should give us something fun to keep track of throughout the broadcast.

12:46: The opening bout, between Irishman Andy Lee and Scotsman Craig McEwan, is underway. As best we can tell, McEwan doesn't own his own trunks and has borrowed a pair of James Toney's.

12:51: With McEwan in control in the third round, Bill offers the carefully contemplated analysis, "Wow, Lee sucks." I'll say this much: His loss to Brian Vera a few years ago doesn't look like a fluke at all.

1:02: Max Kellerman wonders if this is a "star making" performance for McEwan. Love you, Max, but you're reaching. McEwan simply looks like the better of two clubfighters. Meanwhile, Nigel compares ref Steve Smoger to a Weeble.

1:06: Jim Lampley, who seemed a safe bet to give us one pronunciation of "Dzinziruk" and stick with it, corrects his pronunciation mid-sentence, meaning we're up to two.

1:09: Lee is starting to make a comeback in the seventh after losing five consecutive rounds, but the commentators note that he might need a knockout to win. Good observation by Lamps: "Getting a knockout when Steve Smoger is the referee isn't all that easy."

1:15: Note to McEwan's trainer: A 10-rounder doesn't have "championship rounds."

1:17: I've put up a good fight so far, but now I'm officially struggling to keep my eyes open. I'm eating snacks even though I'm not hungry and taking running-diary notes even though I have nothing to say, just to keep myself occupied and, hopefully, awake.

1:18: Staying awake gets much easier as Lee drops McEwan with a one-two combo late in the ninth round! McEwan's nose is gushing blood, and the final round looks like it's going to be VERY interesting.

1:20: Lee gets the come-from-behind stoppage in the final round! You'll never believe this, but Lou DiBella is behaving in an excited manner. It was a good fight with a dramatic finish, just what we were expecting to get from the moment Lee-McEwan was signed. However, if I may play the role of party pooper, allow me to opine that Lee, despite winning this fight, is going absolutely nowhere.

1:24: I'm sure the 5,000th time I see the Martinez-Paul Williams knockout, I'll get sick of it. But until then, keep those replays coming.

1:30: Lampley pronounces "Dzinziruk" a third different way! Nobody ever would have guessed we'd get up to three without any help from Roy Jones or Harold Lederman. (ED. NOTE: Lennox would've butchered it three times all by himself!)

1:32: The entire room groans in unison as we see that the referee for the main event is Arthur Mercante Jr. Nigel sums up our feelings with two syllables: "Oh god." He took the words right out of Roy Jones' mouth.

1:37: Jones says Martinez "can do all different Roy Jones type things." Poll question: Would you rather endure a night of third-person egomaniacal Roy or God-is-great preacher Roy?

1:38: Here's something nobody predicted: Dzinziruk, who's known as a great jabber, is getting completely outjabbed by Martinez in the opening round. If Martinez keeps jabbing like this, that ought to render all comparisons to Jones moot.

1:48: Martinez scores a flash knockdown early in the fourth, as Dzinziruk's knee touches the canvas after a punch lands on the back of his head.

1:54: The champ delivers another knockdown late in the fifth, and this one is of the serious variety. Come on, early ending! Papa needs his sleep.

3:00: Thanks to Daylight Savings Time, the running-diary timeline takes a leap forward. Did you know that New Zealand entomologist George Vernon Hudson first proposed the idea of Daylight Savings Time? Thank you, Wikipedia, for letting me know which dead guy to direct my hatred toward.

3:02: It's the seventh round and I have to give Dzinziruk credit, he's hanging in there despite being in with a vastly more talented fighter. Bill, Rich Marotta, and I discussed in the "What Nobody Is Talking About" segment on Ring Theory last week that people were misguided in assuming this fight would be boring, that they were ignoring the realities that both fighters would be coming to win and that Martinez is never boring, and indeed, this fight is proving to be pretty enjoyable (if a bit one-sided).

3:05: Martinez puts it all together in the eighth and scores three knockdowns, and Mercante stops it (one knockdown too late, in my view). This was a superb showing by Martinez—a truly complete performance. Conventional wisdom said he was in with an opponent you can't look good against. When you prevail spectacularly against a guy like that, it makes a statement. The

pound-for-pound top-five positioning gets a little more interesting to discuss every week.

3:08: It's a Joe Santoliquito sighting! The managing editor of The Ring couldn't be at the pay-per-view party because he was in Foxwoods, awarding the winner of the fight The Ring's middleweight championship belt and getting about a half-second of face time on HBO.

3:15: The show is over and everyone is gathering up their stuff to head home. So that'll do it for this running diary. But fear not, running diary fans; we're at just eight weeks and counting until the Fight of the Year …

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Comment on this article

the Roast says:

Nice read. Funny stuff. I knew Nigel Collins had to be a big fan of TSS even though he always takes shots at us "keyboard tappers"

ultimoshogun says:

Haha, good stuff! The comment bout Mayorga building a hammock and sippin a daiquiri was my favorite.

tstarks says:

Is far preferable.

tstarks says:

It tricked me! I gave it a "title" as "Third Person Roy," which makes my above comment a bit more understandbale.