Written by Eric Raskin
Monday, 21 March 2011 15:08

In honor of yet another boisterous crowd at Montreal's Bell Centre on Saturday night, let's get things started with an email from my frequent Twitter/email compadre Jordan Stone-McLean, one of the finest fight fans I know of from north of the border:

Hi Eric,

I wanted to bounce this off someone. A middleweight tournament, a plan for Sergio Martinez:
Semis:
Dmitry Pirog vs. Daniel Jacobs
Andy Lee vs. Matthew Macklin

I think these fights can sell based on the rematch and Irish/English rivalry, respectively. All these fighters have been or are scheduled to be on HBO soon and none should be overly expensive. More importantly, none are fighting in the Top Rank Boxing League.

Finals:

Winner vs. Winner
Loser vs. Loser

The overall tourney winner then fights Sergio for the championship. Ideally, Martinez would fight someone in the main event on each of these two cards, potential candidates would be Kermit Cintron and Alfredo Angulo. I think both of those fights are bankable, especially the latter. I also think neither is a huge threat to upset the apple cart, but in fairness nobody south of 168 pounds is.

Downfalls:
- No contingency for Sergio losing
- Golden Boy Promotions
- Who is Matthew Macklin?
- Angulo is on the milk carton
- The WBO

Upside:
- Martinez has to wring a few profitable fights out of this pool of young talent and I think this is the best way, rather than unceremoniously eating them one-at-a-time
- Boxing writers tend to write more about tournaments just by virtue of them being tournaments., e.g. 140-pound series of fights vs. 118-pound tournament
- I don't see Pirog or Lee making boring fights
- More Lou DiBella—JSM

Jordan,

I think it's a fine idea, other than the fact that I really don't see any of the four fighters being able to compete with Martinez. But all of the fights you're proposing are good ones, and if the problem with Pirog specifically is that nobody knows who he is yet, two wins on HBO should remedy that. You're right that a tournament structure automatically generates interest and that we all want a whole lotta Lou. For my money, a series of fights against guys like Cintron, Angulo, and Pirog (who, in case you can't tell, would be my pick to win the tournament) are the best possible way for Martinez to pass time until the Super Six is over, the winner has fought Lucian Bute, and we can get a pay-per-view mega-fight matching undisputed super middleweight champion against undisputed middleweight champion. I think by that time, assuming neither Manny Pacquiao nor Floyd Mayweather is willing to fight him, it will make perfect business sense for Martinez to step up to 168 pounds.

All in all, I like the way you're thinking, Jordan. I might quibble about the "loser vs. loser" consolation bout (because a guaranteed HBO return can take some of the urgency out of the semifinal matches), but otherwise, I'm giving it the greenlight.

Unfortunately, my greenlight doesn't count for much in this business. All I can really hope for is that my writing entertains my readers, so let's get to the Rants:

• I'm going to go against the general grain and say that I'd like to see Odlanier Solis get another

chance against Vitali Klitschko when his leg injuries are healed. I don't believe for one second that Solis was looking for a way out and quit—that's an irresponsible accusation to make. It seems more like he came in with a pre-existing injury and hoped it wouldn't trip him up, but it did. In any case, for most of that first round, Solis appeared to have a plan, had figured out how to land counterpunches against Klitschko, and was doing reasonably well. Once David Haye and Tomasz Adamek have had their chances, assuming neither succeeds, I'm curious to see if a healthy Solis can give one of the Klitschko brothers a real challenge. It sure beats the hell out of watching Sam Peter try again.

• Of course, the Klitschko-Solis fight was only half the story on Saturday afternoon; the other half was Epix's debut boxing broadcast. Obviously, they have some technical kinks to work out. Then there are kinks that can't be worked out—like the fact that Lennox Lewis, a great heavyweight champion and an all-around nice guy, has never had anything interesting to say and is useless as a commentator. On the Klitschko-Solis broadcast, the weakness that stood out most was Lewis' utter lack of energy. If the color analyst looks like he'd rather be napping, how am I supposed to be inspired as a viewer? I'm pleased to have Epix involved in boxing, but if these are the sort of "talent" decisions they're going to make, hiring an HBO discard who wasn't discarded by accident, it doesn't bode well.

• Direct from the mouth of Epix President and CEO Mark Greenberg last week: "Our announce team is going to include Sam Rosen doing the blow-by-blow with Tony Paige along with Lennox. We think we have an opportunity to help breathe some life into the sport, as others have been doing as well, by trying to attract a younger audience." Rosen, unquestionably a quality pro, is 63. Paige, a fine representative of boxing for many years, is 57. Lewis is 45. Subjective views about the quality of the announce team aside, does this feel like a formula for attracting a younger audience?

• Hey everyone, James Kirkland's back … has no remaining space available for tattoos. In other news, James Kirkland is back.

• How lucky is Jhon Berrio that the controversial Klitschko-Solis ending came along just one day later to make everyone forget how suspiciously he went down and stayed down against Kirkland? Come on, Jhon, make it look good. I don't mean to tell you how to do your job, but next time, wait for a punch to land. Just a thought.

• Things I like about Brad Solomon: a good story (learning to box in jail), hunger, skill, and quickness. Things I don't like about Brad Solomon: He's the latest member of a generation of fighters trying to use Roy Jones' style without possessing Roy Jones' supernatural ability.

• While some folks express moral opposition to Miguel Cotto-Antonio Margarito II or view it as a sort of loser's-bracket bout, I have to say, I'm legitimately fired up for it. It's an even matchup with a number of possible outcomes and it's the most genuine grudge match in recent boxing history. Count me in. Just don't try to tell me Cotto's in line for a rematch with Manny Pacquiao if he wins.

• Speaking of good matchups, on a much smaller scale, I'm looking forward to Peter Quillen vs.

Jesse Brinkley. That's one of the better fights Telefutura has given us in a while. (Admittedly, that's akin to saying, "This is one of the better Nicolas Cage action flicks," but still, a compliment is a compliment.)

• By the way, I was wondering what the "88M" title was when I watched the Cotto-Mayorga pay-per-view: http://fightnews.com/Boxing/wbb.jpg . It turns out it's the WBB title. Sweet. I was really getting bored only having 37 sanctioning bodies to choose from.

• Here's news most boxing writers won't give you: In a recent World Series of Poker Circuit tournament at Caesars in Atlantic City, Brian Ali won and Jeff Frazier finished fourth—and, yes, Ali knocked out Frazier.

• Don't miss a brand new episode of Ring Theory this Wednesday, where we'll welcome HBO's Max Kellerman for his second guest appearance "geeking out" with me and Bill Dettloff. We'll discuss Sergio Martinez's future, this weekend's Boxing After Dark card headlined by Yuriorkis Gamboa, Nonito Donaire signing with Golden Boy, and much more. Call me biased, but I predict the conversation will be more compelling than any roundtable analysis you saw on Epix this past Saturday afternoon.

Eric Raskin can be contacted at RaskinBoxing@yahoo.com. You can follow him on Twitter @EricRaskin and listen to new episodes of his podcast, Ring Theory, at http://ringtheory.podbean.com

Comment on this article

FighterforJC says:

Speaking of commentators, I am AWESOME. Check out my mic skills in this boxing match: [url]http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xICNOdPdwho

Radam G says:

FJC, ya aight! But don't jiggy with da BIG HEAD! Holla!