

RASKIN'S RANTS: Oscar Noticed For His Words, Hopkins Noticed For His Looks

Written by Eric Raskin
Tuesday, 31 May 2011 10:51



Let's start this week's column with my predictions for the NHL and NBA finals. I predict the Heat will beat the Mavs because if there's one thing I've learned in my 35 years of life, it's that the forces of evil usually prevail in the end. I predict that the Canucks will beat the Bruins because there has to be an upper limit on the evil, and allowing all four Boston teams to win championships in a span of seven years would be excessive. And lastly, I predict that every single game in each championship series will end after I've fallen asleep.

Thank goodness for morning SportsCenter.

And thank goodness for the Raskin's Rants mailbag. Here goes with this week's most interesting reader email:

Hey,

I thought your article on Marquez-Pacquiao 3 was really good except when you brought up HBO's connection to Time-Warner:

"It owns Sports Illustrated, which means HBO might be able to guarantee that Pacquiao goes on the cover the week of the fight."

As a journalist, I would think you should be offended at the idea of promoters manipulating editorial decisions to get a fight. What if Golden Boy began promising Ring covers as fight promotion?

Let me know what you think.

Thanks,
Tim

Tim,

When I wrote last week's column, I actually considered including a couple more sentences delving into the very issue you broach, but it felt a bit off-topic, so I limited my comment to that single sentence you quoted. But your email gives me a perfect excuse to explain myself better.

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As a journalist, I am indeed offended at the idea of anyone other than the editors of the magazine deciding who's on the cover, what the articles inside are, etc. But that doesn't mean it doesn't happen, and it doesn't mean I haven't facilitated such behavior at times in my career, as long as I felt the editorial quality wasn't being compromised.

To be clear, I'm not talking about my experience at The Ring at all. As some readers know, I was the editor-in-chief of a poker magazine called ALL IN for about six years, and the poker journalism business simply couldn't exist without advertising dollars from the online poker sites. I never let PokerStars or Full Tilt Poker or any other advertiser dictate who would go on the cover, but I did quickly learn the importance to our company's survival of making sure those online sites' logos were visible on the cover. Also, we put together a holiday gift guide every year, and it wasn't coincidence that the products of companies that advertised with us tended to get in there (along with plenty of products from companies that didn't). Maybe this says something negative to you about my personal integrity; to me, it says I was willing to play ball, up to a point, in order to help keep the magazine afloat. The important thing is that I never made an editorial decision that I felt did a disservice to our readers. That was where I drew the line. (One of our competitors actually once ran a Full Tilt advertisement as a gatefold cover. It made me want to vomit. So before you accuse me of selling out, just know that everything is relative.)

I can only speak for my personal experiences. I can't speak for what any other editor has gone through. I have no idea if the bigwigs at Golden Boy have ever tried to insist upon a cover subject for The Ring magazine. What I do know is that Top Rank superstar Manny Pacquiao appears on about three or four Ring covers a year, which suggests there's still editorial autonomy over there. And I've never seen a Ring cover or feature subject that made me say, "Whoa, that fighter doesn't belong there."

Getting back to my specific comment in last week's column, I have absolutely no idea whether Sports Illustrated's parent company ever attempts to dictate what goes into the editorial content of the magazine. All I wrote was that it MIGHT be something they could use to sweeten the deal and secure the Pacquiao-Marquez fight for HBO. The important thing to remember is that there's nothing remotely inappropriate about the notion of putting Pacquiao on the cover. He's one of the most famous, popular, highest-earning athletes in the world; if anything, it's pathetic that SI hasn't put him on the cover yet. Maybe it would be inappropriate for Time Warner to PROMISE Arum a Pacquiao cover. But they could at least say they'd strongly consider it, with the option to go in a different direction if something else major happens in the sports world that week. That wouldn't be a sellout at all; to NOT consider putting Manny on the cover the week of his next big fight would be editorially irresponsible, frankly.

It would be different if we were talking about Time Warner telling SI to put Victor Ortiz or Yuriorkis Gamboa or Chad Dawson on the cover—fighters who aren't remotely cover-worthy and wouldn't sell on the newsstand. We're talking about Manny Pacquiao. I don't think there's anything wrong with the folks at HBO talking to their bosses at Time Warner about talking to the editors at SI about doing something that helps the company without compromising editorial integrity at all.

Speaking of editorial integrity (or the compromising of it), let's get to the weekly Rants:

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- I'm not entirely sure what to make of Oscar De La Hoya tweeting his way through the 12-step recovery plan, but I guess that's life in 2011. It goes without saying that De La Hoya making amends with Bob Arum, however he chooses to do it, has the potential to be very good for boxing. Two additional comments: If Oscar really is staying at a \$77,000-a-month facility, I guess I can rule out lack of budget as a possible reason for why RingTV.com axed its two best writers earlier this year; and how lustily do you think Dr. Drew's producers are licking their lips right now?
- A few days ago, I re-watched the end of the Tim Bradley-Devon Alexander fight (research for a piece I was writing), and these were Bradley's exact words in the postfight interview: "[Amir] Khan right now would probably be the number one on my list right now. But I want the fight fans to pick who I fight next and I'll fight him." Bradley then added, "But first, I need to consult with my wife ... Morgan Fairchild! Yeah, that's the ticket."
- Have you heard the rumor that Ronnie punches The Situation on the upcoming season of Jersey Shore? Just when I think I'm ready to give up on that show, they find a way to pull me back in.
- A press release went out last week announcing the premiere of a new round-the-clock combat sports channel, Fight Now TV. It's not available yet on my cable system, but I like the concept and hope it takes off. There's no such thing as too much boxing on TV (unless, of course, it's a roundtable boxing discussion between Skip Bayless, Fabolous, and Jalen Rose).
- Boxing writers will often explain that a fight looks "different" live and that's why they scored it the way they did. But is it possible that "different" means you have a worse view of the action than everyone watching on TV does? I found this article by Scott Kraus very interesting—definitely worth a read and a moment's deep thought: <http://queensberry-rules.com/2011-articles/may/the-flaws-of-judging-boxing-from-ringside.html>
- I went to see The Hangover Part 2 over the weekend, and it turns out Mike Tyson's acting performance in the original was no fluke. (Interpret that as you wish.)
- The highlight of Bernard Hopkins going through the ESPN "car wash," as they call it, on Friday, was the end of his appearance on The Herd radio show, when Colin Cowherd told him, "You're a good looking guy." Damned straight. There's a reason the ladies call Bernard "The Sexecutioner."
- At about 210 pounds a decade ago, Mo Harris was a pretty decent heavyweight. At 244 pounds on Friday night, Harris was completely gassed in less than three moderately paced rounds. As they say, sometimes less is Mo.
- I read many inaccurate reports over the last few days suggesting that when Tony Thompson beat Harris, it earned him the right to go straight to a final eliminator against Eddie Chambers. Come on, do your research, people. Everyone knows there's a rule in the sanctioning-body bylaws that states it's illegal to stage heavyweight elimination tournaments without including Ray Austin.

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- Check out a new episode of Ring Theory (<http://ringtheory.podbean.com>) this Wednesday, with all the analysis you can handle of B-Hop's history-making win, vicious criticism of terrible press-row scorecards, predictions for Carl Froch vs. Glen Johnson and Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. vs. Sebastian Zbik, and much more. And we guarantee you at least one shout-out to the legendary German referee Hans Anal, or your money back.

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

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the Roast says:

Excellent Rant. I hope that Ronnie does punch the Sitch. Anyone who watches the Shore knows that Ronnie's punches are very slow but if you were to get in the way of one of those bombs, that would hurt.