Written by George Kimball
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The bookmakers back in England make Carl Froch a 4-1 favorite to retain his WBC title and, more importantly, move into the final of Showtime's World Boxing Classic when he meets 42 year-old Glen Johnson in the Adrian Phillips Ballroom at Boardwalk Hall Saturday night.

He probably will, but if we'd put our money where our mouth was every time Glencoffe didn't have a chance over the last ten years, we'd have been broke ten times over, so we won't be tempted to reach into the pocket for this one, either.

At the same time, all logic argues in favor of Froch (27-1) having his way and moving into the Super Six Grand Finale against unbeaten (24-0) WBA champ Andre Ward, if for no other

reason than that he, alone among the eight participants (the original dirty half-dozen plus two subs acquired along the way), appears to have actually improved his game as the tournament progressed.

Froch dramatically announced his presence on these shores in April of 2009 with his last-minute knockout of Jermain Taylor at Foxwoods. (While it was a fight that matched two Super Six participants, Froch-Taylor actually preceded the announcement of the Classic by several months, and was not part of the tournament proper.)

But until he separated Taylor from his senses with less than half a minute to go, Froch had looked awkward and amateurish for the better part of the evening. Taylor had floored him in the third round, and built up such a commanding lead that he could literally have lost only by a knockout.

In his next two Super Six bouts, Froch defended his title with a split decision over American Andre Dirrell in Nottingham, lost a hometown decision to Mikkel Kessler in Denmark, and then utterly dominated Arthur Abraham, the onetime tournament favorite, barely losing a round (if he lost one at all) in Finland back in November to earn his No. 2 seed in the semifinal.

Not only has Froch improved with every bout over the raw, unpolished fighter who pulled the rabbit out of the hat in the Taylor fight, but he's done it from an underdog's role against what turned out to be the tournament's toughest draw. In fact, since the beginning of 2004, Froch's list of opponents – Jean Pascal, Taylor, Dirrell, Kessler, Abraham, and now Johnson – looks like a veritable murderers' row alongside anyone else's.

Johnson (51-14-2) got into this position on the basis of one Super Six fight – a knockout of Allan Green, who wangled his way into the tournament as a substitute for the injured Kessler and then didn't win a single fight. And Ward captured his half of the draw by beating Kessler, Green, and what was left of Abraham.

"I'd agree that Froch has looked much better as the tournament has gone on, said Leon Margules, who promotes Johnson in conjunction with Lou DiBella. "But this has been such a diverse field with contrasting styles that it's hard to know whether that's part of a pattern.

"Many would have agreed that Taylor was the most talented boxer of the bunch, so it isn't surprising that he seemed to handle Froch so easily in that fight. And, as Froch and then Abraham demonstrated, he had stamina problems and chin problems. The Dirrell fight I'm not sure Froch even won, and I thought Kessler pretty clearly beat him. Yes, Froch looked masterful against Abraham, but then Abraham turned out to be the biggest disappointment of the whole tournament."

Indeed, following his knockout of Taylor, the World Boxing Classic was Abraham's to lose, and he did just that, losing his next three tournament bouts on the trot.

"I think you have to wait until after this fight to make any meaningful evaluation of Froch," said Margules. "He won't be fighting Arthur Abraham this time. Glen could give him a world of

problems he's never even dreamed of."

At the prefight press conference in New York Wednesday, Froch and Johnson were respectful and cordial, but Glencoffe's trainer Orlando Cuellar sucked half the oxygen out of the room with some long-winded woofing on Johnson's behalf. Froch termed Cuellar "absolutely delusional.

"Not only is his fighter not going to win the fight, he's not going to win a round," predicted the Englishman. "He's not going to win a single minute of any round. Write that down, would you?"

* * *

Although the main event isn't scheduled until 10, Showtime planned to go on the air at 9 o'clock, preceding the live Super Six semi with a tape-delayed broadcast of Kessler's [non-tournament] fight against Mehdi Bouadla from Copenhagen.

A few days ago the kickoff was moved up to 8:45 pm – to make room for a special episode of "Fight Camp 360: Pacquiao vs. Mosley."

Now, you might wonder about the programming wisdom of running an extra episode of a one-sided fight that occurred more than a month ago, but that, it turns out, is only one of many questions that need to be asked in light of what Showtime itself calls a "shocking" revelation.

On Wednesday, Showtime's publicists leaked to the media a 30-second preview of the Pacquiao-Mosley footage that will air Saturday night, revealing that, on his stool just before the 10th round, Mosley pleaded with trainer Naazim Richardson "You've got to stop the fight. I can't move."

Richardson, crouched in front of Mosley, ignores the fighter's plea and basically tells him to suck it up.

"Shane, you got to get down and find it," Naz tells him.

Okay, it didn't materially affect the outcome, since Mosley went on to lose the eleventh and twelfth, just as he had the first 10 rounds. But what if he'd been seriously hurt in those last three minutes? Would we still have waited four weeks to find out he wanted to quit before the last round?

Naazim Richardson isn't the only one who should be called into question here. The footage also shows a Nevada State Athletic Commission inspector perched just over the trainer's shoulder, intently listening to every word of the exchange.

Once it became apparent that the trainer was going to ignore his fighter's wishes, shouldn't the inspector have been ethically bound to call it to the attention of either the ringside physician or his immediate superiors?

If Showtime will find itself answering some uncomfortable questions about its handling of the

“shocking” (their word, not ours) scene, what about its partner in the much-ballyhooed arrangement with CBS, which was supposed to get first crack at airing the Fight Camp 360 episodes for that fight?

Who knew what, and when? Was CBS a participant in thee decision to suppress the footage for a month?

Have a look and judge for yourself:

{youtube} b9tUUGIiKj0 {/youtube}

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As for the other question fight fans have been asking about Saturday’s telecast – given her past performances, will Showtime again put a mike on Froch’s fiancée Rachael Cordingely? – we’ve got news for you: They’ve never miked her before.

While the network has during several of Froch’s fights used its cameras to zoom in for “Honey shots” of the comely Ms. Cordingely, those blood-curdling shrieks just happen to be her natural decibel level, picked up by Showtime’s ringside microphones.

The pity is that Jermain Taylor didn’t last long enough in the tournament for him and Froch to meet in Little Rock. Rachael’s mantra sounds so much like the Arkansas “Woo! Pig! Sooey!” cheer that the locals would have been wondering which guy she was rooting for.

Comment on this article

dino da vinci says:

Let me help. Nasim Richardson handled the situation letter perfect. Before we hear from all the marginal and uninformed "fans" out there, who truly don't know the sport, these scenarios arise. A trainer takes in information in 180-second intervals. He then dispenses advice accordingly. Do you really think this is the first fighter to ever have self doubt during the middle of a war? Do you think that somewhere in boxing history, a fighter in the amateurs wanted to quit, only to have his mouthpiece inserted and then go out and not only win the round and fight, but go on and win a legitimate world title? It is a battle of wills, people! There is no doubt in my mind that under different conditions, Nasim would have pulled the plug, and wouldn't have been needed to be told to. Nasim Richardson is not only a top of the food chain trainer, he did exactly what he should have. As for should the Inspector have pulled the plug? ...uh, no. First off, from an "officials" standpoint, only a referee or a doctor should be allowed to stop a contest. Your question addresses trainer/fighter privilege. It would be equivalent for every time you have a confrontation with your partner(wife, husband, girlfriend, boyfriend, whatever), somebody pokes their head into the middle of the conversation and says that you two now need to get a separation or divorce. You would look at them and say, "And who are you?"; followed by, "Mind

your own business". To further belabor this point, who in theory should know the fighter better than the man who guides him through his paces on anywhere from a daily to hourly to minute by minute basis.

Radam G says:

Well, for all those in da know. This story is just da know nothings and media rating. Boxer have always thought about quitting in the middle of a bout and did, if they didn't have the right type of corner or got what they were looking for. Now me holla at history. First black heavyweight world champ, Jack Johnson quit in his bout with Jesse Willard after the money man gave Johnson's wife the additional $30,000 that he was suppose to get to take a dive. Cassius Clay -- later Muhammad Ali -- try to quit on Sonny "Nighttrain" Liston, but the greatest trainer of all times, Angie Dundee wasn't having it. Sugar Ray Leonard came to the conclusion that he was going to lose to Tommy Hearns in the first bout, until Angie jumped up into da Sugarman' arse and wouldn't let him slide to defeat by telling him, "You're blowin, ' SON!... You can win this thing." What the Genie Naazim did, is what trainers get paid for, or every scary boxer will be pulling a Oliver McCall and what that Polish heavyweight from Chicago use to do all the time -- QUIT! Having a FUDGING BREAKDOWN! I can't think of da sucka's name right now, but I'm sure the Roast will come to my rescue. Holla!

the Roast says:

Andrew Golota RG. The king of the quitters.

Radam G says:

Ditto, the Roast! Ya da MAN -- a posting pugilistic Bible! Holla!

SpringsT says:

Thank you, George. The patter of your keyboard is still, but those memories, stories, and musings you crafted will speak to us for as long as strong men do battle -and go down swingin'. Good bye.

brownsugar says:

This piece by Kimbal really pissed me off,... the audacity to break out a story saturated with alarm while designating responsibility. The nerve... but that's how Kimball wrote... sometimes you didn't like it... but you couldn't brush it aside or sweep it under the rug either. He'll be missed.