Written by Ron Borges
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Rios talks trash, but backs it up, unlike Haye and Klitschko, both of whom showed straw-weight hearts and cajones last weekend.

One of the beautiful things about boxing is that the stench of a bad fight – no matter how odorous - doesn't often linger because soon a more stirring example of the sweet side of The Sweet Science comes along.
Fortunately for anyone who laid their eyes on David Haye's pathetically pacifistic "effort'' to unify the heavyweight title last weekend in Hamburg, Germany that sorry vision should be wiped out this weekend by Brandon Rios and Urbano Antillon, two lightweight brawlers who are squaring off on SHOWTIME and seem sure to be everything Haye and Wladimir Klitschko are not.

First off they both come to fight, not to feint or faint. Secondly, neither is likely to remove his shoe to claim a broken toe undid them, as Haye tried after losing a 12-round decision in one-sided fashion to the ever cautious Klitschko.

Lastly, and most importantly, Rios and Antillon dislike each other in a way that is not a con job. Haye ran such a con on the public and the media, claiming he found both Klitschkos so abhorrent he would decapitate them. As he found out, it's easier to wear a T-shirt with a picture of a decapitation than to actually carry one out. The former only requires a few dollars. The latter requires a few cojones, which he clearly lacked. Haye's problem against Klitschko (who himself will never be mistaken for Braveheart) was not a broken toe. It was a broken heart.

Now maybe he and Klitschko did dislike each other but neither was prepared to do much about it. Rios and Antillon, on the other hand, are far more prone to act upon their distaste for the other when they square off over the WBA lightweight title Rios presently holds.

Each is a come forward brawler, two free swingers who care more about taking you out than the risk involved to do so. That has made Rios a rising star and it's what has brought Antillon a most unusual thing – a third shot at a world title after two unsuccessful tries.

Antillon (28-2, 20 KO) came up short against Miguel Acosta in 2009 (he was stopped in the 9th round of a quite entertaining fight) and lost by a hair to Humberto Soto last December. The latter was a fight so closely contested a rematch was set for earlier this year but Soto pulled out with

a late injury.

That landed him a date with the trash-talking Rios, who thus far is most famous for making disparaging remarks about Manny Pacquiao' s trainer, Freddie Roach. Rios later claimed he was not mocking Roach's on-going battle with Parkinson's even though an HBO camera caught it all on tape in the days leading up to Pacquiao's destruction of Rios' stablemate, Antonio Margarito, last November. Rightly or wrongly it was written off as the mindless act of a 25-year-old who at times acts before he thinks.
Saturday night Antillon is hoping that repeats itself and Rios seems game after having convinced himself that Antillon is not only trying to take away his livelihood but also insulted his wife. When the fight was first being hyped several months ago, Rios stood at a podium and claimed, "He's opening his big f------ mouth and taking about my wife. You don't mention my family. He made it personal.''

Frankly, with these two guys it was personal from the outset even though Antillon is still trying to figure out what he said about Rios' wife. That will be of little import on Saturday however because he knows the more important fact for him is that unless he wins there will be no fourth world title fight in his future.

"I know you don't get this many opportunities in boxing,'' Antillon has conceded. "I've put in the time. I've put in the work. I'm ready to become a world champion. I hope Rios is prepared to bring his best because that's what he's going to get from me.''

Antillon will have to be at his best to hold back Rios (27-0-1, 19 KO), who won his portion of the fractured title with a sixth round knockout of Acosta in February. That's the same Acosta who stopped Antillon, a fact likely to make Rios bolder than normal – which is a difficult concept to imagine.

"It's not like I hate him but I don't think we like each other,'' Rios joked. "I don't like him. He says he is going to test me and that I'm not ready for what he is going to bring to the table. I hope he tests me, but he had better be bringing a really big table. If it's a small table, he is definitely getting knocked out.

"I worked very hard to win the belt. No way I'm giving it up in my first defense. Not against this guy!''

"This guy'' is one of the most dangerous uncrowned lightweights in the world, a fighter who will try to pressure Rios and take advantage of his youthful inexperience and the flaws in his sometimes wild style.

The difference between Rios and Haye is that while Haye makes threats he does not intend to follow through on, Rios comes to the arena with only one set of intentions: bad ones.

"This is a great fight for television and the fans,'' Rios promised. "We are both going to be getting after each other.''

After being subjected to watching Klitschko paw at Haye with his jab for 12 rounds and then jumping straight back and grab him behind the neck every time Haye moved toward him, Rios-Antillon promises to give fight fans what they pay for and what they deserve – a real fight.

While neither is the most skillful practitioner of the sweet science both are emotionally invested in what someone who steps between the ropes is supposed to be invested in: they are fighters who take things personally even when there's nothing to be taken personally but the presence of the other anywhere near them.

"He's an idiot for continuing to still talk about what he says I said about his wife, and I'm surprised he's still talking about it,'' Antillon said several days ago. "He's an immature kid who is going to get taken to school. I am totally confident and ready and deep down know I am going to win this fight. Rios is a strong guy but he leaves himself wide open a lot.

"People know what they are going to get in our fight. Fans want action, and that's what they are going to get from the opening bell -- non-stop action.''

Antillon's trainer, long-time southern California fixture Abel Sanchez, believes Rios' fixation on what Antillon may or may not have said about his wife will lead him right into the spots they most want him to be – inside the hurt locker.

The ring is no place for wild emotion. It is a place for precision, aggression and a well-thought out plan. Sanchez is sure Antillon has one. As for young Rios? Not so much.

"This is going to be a great fight for as long as it lasts,'' Sanchez said. "If he needs to come in with a big chip on his shoulder, if that's what is motivating himself for this fight, then I think he's making a mistake.

"I definitely think that's been a distraction for him. He better be totally prepared because Urbano has never been more confident.''

Neither has Rios but then again when has he ever not been? While Sanchez cautions fighters to rein in their emotions, the man who knows Rios best believes it is that emotion which has brought him to this moment and it is what will get him through it.

"I know Brandon and it is not a big deal for him to be mad at an opponent going into a fight,'' trainer Robert Garcia said. "Actually, it's a good thing for him. If it wasn't, I would worry about it, or say something but Brandon needs it. It won't affect how he performs. I would be more concerned if he wasn't on edge before a fight.

"Brandon is a true fighter who is 100 percent healthy and fit. He's ready for 12 hard rounds if that's how long it lasts. We're all looking forward to Saturday night.''

So is promoter Bob Arum, who believes the antidote for the dyspepsia fight fans felt after Klitschko-Haye is a night at the fights with Brandon Rios and Urbano Antillon.

The truth of that will be revealed Saturday night on SHOWTIME but I wouldn't bet against it. I also wouldn't bet against Antillon this time, either.

Comment on this article

Radam G says:

WOW! These guys won't have to do much to make REAL know-their-syet boxing fans forget about the Doc WK-Haye bum-and-chump fest from what I heard. Antillion is coming to fight -- and hopefully without anymore of Footgate's broken toe or blisters. [Wow! How things have changed. Just imagine a Yank and a Brit coming up with foot excuses in a game where you'd expect hand ones. Wow! Maybe I'm missed something. Isn't boksing HAND-TO-HAND combat?]

Because Antillion has some cojones and will bypass the foot-excuse jive, Bam Bam is going to spank his arse HARD. Bam Bam is going to bust him up and beat him down like a goldminer blowin' up _____ to collect that gold. That's RIGHT! Let it be told that Bam Bam is quite young and bold and will make this sucka fold. And, unlike in the Doc WK/Haye Bout, no jive-turkey ____ needs to be sold. YUP! A severe arse thrashing Antillion is gonna take. He is in dat squared jungle with a dangerous young lion, not a fruitcake. Bam Bam has warned him like the noisy rattling of a rattle snake. But some people just don't believe and won't listen for heaven's sake. Holla!

brownsugar says:

Better watch some of Rio while you can... cause I don't know how long he can keep this up... (I hope forever but you know how that goes).... Also Paul lays it on the line the same night against that's done 2 or 3 times as many rounds in the amateurs as Paul has fought in his entire boxing career. Paul is busy, but Lara is sharp and quick. To Paul.... respect is everything... he's so stubborn he'll still take risks just to prove he's the baddest.... and Lara wants to show his complacent effort against the surprisingly resourceful Molina...was a fluke... Some serious televised violence on tap tomorrow nite... can't wait!!! WHERES THE PREDICTION PAGE EM?

DaveB says:

This is going to be a barn burner, for as long as it lasts.

the Roast says:

Wlad and Haye fought? See, I already forgot!

Radam G says:

Hehehehehehe! The Roast is such a wise guy. Hey fly guy, you are one funny dude. I bet it is

hard for sadness to survive around you. You ROAST that jive ashes. Holla!