

Andre Ward Win Gets Solid Numbers For HBO

Written by Michael Woods

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Looks like HBO's pursuit of Andre Ward paid off. The Oakland boxer last fought on HBO six years ago, and his return to the cabler paid off with some solid numbers. According to Nielsen, the Sept. 8 main event bout of Andre Ward vs. Chad Dawson delivered an audience of 1.3 million HBO viewers for the live, first time airing of the fight.

That continues HBO's streak of generating more than one million viewers for each of its World Championship Boxing main event fights (live, first-time airing) in 2012.

If you're into the head to head stuff, you might be interested that HBO's audience for Ward-Dawson nearly quadrupled (+287%) the viewership of Showtime's Championship Boxing from 10PM-10:45PM (344,000 viewers) on Saturday. Showtime had a solid main event, Lucas Matthyse-Ajose Olusegun, but were plagued by the late plug-pulling of the original mainer, Devon Alexander-Randall Bailey, because of a Bailey injury. Showtime has to be happy that Matthyse's buzz kicked up a notch, I'd venture to say.

I've enjoyed the recent block programming that we've come to expect on HBO, with docu-mercials and such coming on after bouts. On Saturday night, according to Nielsen, HBO reached 2.8 million boxing fans with the WCB live event, the Martinez-Chavez 24/7 installment No. 2, Max Kellerman's Face Off and the JCC Jr 2 Days. (You guys know I'm an unabashed fan of Jim Lampley's "Fight Game." For the record, his third episode debuts on Sept. 22, at 10:45 PM ET. The episode focuses on the dueling 9-15 cards: How did it happen? Who won and who lost? And what does it tell us about boxing?)

The premiere audience for "24/7" last Saturday (747,000 viewers) marked the fifth most watched episode of the series in its five-year history. That stat struck me, considering there was neither a Mayweather nor a Pacquiao attached. This should make those worriers who worry that the sport will drop off a cliff when "Money" and Manny exit breathe easier; this is what boxing does...new stars are born, the old leave, the new rise up and make their mark.

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I'm not a numbers-obsessed crazed guy, but I must note that this was a successful, it seems to me, roll of the dice with Ward. Many wondered if his style would ever excite and ignite, many opined that the style clash would result in a dud, but damned if Ward didn't answer the critics, and show some pitbull. The Ward bandwagon is standing room only now, and folks that scoffed at me last year when I wondered about a Andre Ward-Floyd Mayweather fight don't dismiss it as readily now, because many of those same folks have Ward as No. 1 on their pound for pound list. Could "Money" ever make the leap to Ward territory? Likely not, as jumping up twenty pounds in a year is a lot to ask, even for Floyd. But hey, this is the theatre of the unexpected, right? Many folks say they want Ward to fight the winner of the Saturday clash between Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. and Sergio Martinez, and just today, Team Martinez indicated they'd do that, but only if Ward went to 160. Many fight fans expressed interest in seeing Gennady Golovkin do as he said he'd be willing to do, head up from 160 to 168, to Mr Ward's neighborhood, to see if his power came with him.

Readers, weigh in...what should Ward do next?

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deepwater says:

of course he did. all my boxing buddies were looking forward to it. Only the writers on this site were saying its a shame no one will watch the fight or no one cares. real boxing fans care and we know how to tell the people at the bar to watch this fight. blues brother #1 sergio martinez has to get a win over a 185 lb chavez with the judges,the fans, the prompters all against him. ward is 168 you want a shot sergio?the fighter that calls out another fighter has to go to the weightclass. see dawson! he called out ward and had to come to him. come up to 168 if not take on golovkin which you will never ever do. even a fight against the russian that ruined danny jaobs golden career would be impressive of you to take.. cotto should beat trout, cotto can fight canelo and the winner of that could fight sergio. sergios team just trying to make hype about nothing. no ward fight in their future. a cool youtube video shows 8 year old chavez jr fight 2 rounds vs paez jr with no headgear in front of 1000's. check it out. chavez is not in over his head.

deepwater says:

you must be drinking if you think 154 floyd would go up to 168 and fight ward.no 160 for ward no matter what. he fought 178 in olympics. floyd vs winner of cotto vs canelo next year.