

The Boxing Year 2012 in Review; Plus, Marquez Wins Boxer of the Year

Written by Michael Woods

Monday, 31 December 2012 19:09



Some things changed, many stayed the same, but this year in boxing 2012 delivered enough of the unexpected, and enthralling, and inspirational, and infuriating, and poignant to keep us addicted into the new year and beyond. January 2012 kicked off in a hopeful vein--makes sense, with that being the time for resolutions, right?--as Floyd Mayweather took to Twitter and raised a flutter of optimism in our foolish hearts that The Fight would be made when he wrote, "Manny Pacquiao I'm calling you out let's fight May 5th and give the world what they want to see...My Jail Sentence was pushed back because the date was locked in. Step up Punk." Like most of those resolutions, the walk didn't match the talk, however. Floyd phoned Manny, they chatted, some numbers were discussed and we ended up where we were. Nowheresville.

But just because that train was stuck in the mud it doesn't mean the sport didn't keep on chugging. Main Events got boxing's toe back in the broadcast pool with their first installment of the series which debuted on the NBC cable channel. We were introduced to heavyweight

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Bryant Jennings, the 28-year-old Philly fighter who made a serious case for himself as Newcomer of the Year 2012, with wins over Maurice Byarm, Sergei Liakhovich, Steve Collins, Chris Koval, and Bowie Tupou. Could he be the Klitschko Killer, the one to end the reign of superiority enjoyed by Vitali and Wladimir? We resolve to keep watching...

The last Saturday of the first month of the year gave us a dose of that theater of the unexpected, "only in boxing" flavor we crave and appreciate from the savage science, as Team Snooki Boxing did their first show, in Atlantic City. No, Snooki didn't glove up herself. "I'm not messing up this pretty face," she said. "Helping out my dad is No. 1. Me and my dad are like best friends. I'm a daddy's girl." Plenty of room in the pool, we always say. Boxing's low barrier to entry is one of the best and worst things about it. We don't see Snooki trying on a promotional hat as a sign of the apocalypse, we see it as business as usual in the "you can't make this stuff up" world of the fight racket.

We also lost Goody Petronelli, who helped teach Marvin Hagler what nature hadn't about the art of the game. He was a guy you dind't hear a bad story about.

Nonito Donaire kicked off his damned fine year with a decision win over Wilfredo Vazquez Jr., claiming a junior feather crown and earning the first of four Ws. This scrap was notable for another reason; we were chagrined to add another name to our Bad Judges (Black)List, as we just weren't able to ponder how Ruben Garcia, presumably not having been dosed with psilocybin by some merry prankster pre-fight, saw Vazquez a 115-112 winner. But as any long suffering fight fan, we saw the bright light, and said, At least they gave it to the right guy...

Mid-month, Vitali Klitschko made Dereck Chisora pay for slapping him at the weigh-in, taking a unanimous decision from the combustible Brit. The bout was screened in the US by EPIX, the pay cabler which did well this year for itself (and fight fans) by nimbly snagging fights that didn't fit into HBO or Showtime's plans. Buffoon David Haye then showed up at the post-fight presser and got into it with Chisora. He smashed Chisora with a beer bottle and then scurried away, as cops took a hard look at the incident. The sport has a way of letting the idiotic acts and chicanery overshadow the herculean in-the-ring displays of will and skill sometimes, yes, but we as a people are always intrigued by the wrecks on the freeway, and boxing, over all the other sports, offers those with regularity.

Ugh. We'd settle for a bronze age, let alone a golden age, we found ourselves saying as we watched Jean Marc Mormeck engage in a pickup-the-paycheck exercise against Wladimir

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Klitschko in Dusseldorf, Germany on March 3, 2012. Wlad, with the esteemed and beloved Emanuel Steward in his corner, who had as always cautioned against overconfidence in the leadup to the faceoff, exited with a KO4 victory, and Mormeck with a diminished rep.

Erik Morales' legacy lost a tiny bit of luster (and more of the shine would be smudged later in the year) when he couldn't make weight and lost his junior welter belt on the scales the day before his bout with Danny Garcia in Houston. "It wasn't worth the sacrifice at this point for the last couple of pounds," the Mexican told Dan Rafael. "It would hurt me. No point." Besides behaving like a professional, yeah, I guess no point...Garcia, age 24, beat the 35-year-old Morales via UD the next night, and Morales admitted age caught up with him. That wouldn't stop him from pursuing a rematch with the fresh face from Philly. Stubbornness, a good thing on the way up. Not so much in the late innings of a fight life...

The sport lost a good one, in raconteur, author and talking head, Bert Sugar, on March 25. He'd been dealing with lung cancer. Known for his Fedora, omni-present stogie and fondness for amber liquids, along with a near-endless well of tales tall and otherwise, he had been hopeful back in December. "I've learned that getting older means you get aches in places never knew you had," he told me. "I had radiation, chemotherapy, chemo-sabe. The cancer is in remission. It's over, I've won. I'm back, by unpopular demand. I'm coming along. Half the people are rooting for me to recover, half are not. I've been an editor, lawyer, adman, writer, announcer. I've gotten away with things. This has been fun but maybe I'm paying for it. Somewhere, some way, somehow, it's going to come back and revisit you. But I don't regret a step." Sugar was 74.

We all began to seriously ponder the day when we wouldn't have Bernard Hopkins to marvel at, and to make us feel so hopelessly inadequate as physical specimens. On April 28, Hopkins lost a majority decision to Chad Dawson in Atlantic City. The stubborn 47 year-old railed against the decision and maybe the sands of time after the verdict: "What did he do to win that fight? They [the judges] did what they wanted to do. The only way I knew I would win is if I knocked him out. Let the public judge for themselves." That they did, asking not to see these two do it again, but not for the exit of B-Hop who almost all agreed deserves to go out on his own terms and time frame.

In April, Bob Arum told us he'd like to make a Pacquiao-Mayweather fight in 2013, and we held out some hope, but by the end of the year, that was dashed. This being boxing, though, we know it is never wise to hold a funeral until the bodies are cold. And until Floyd and Manny are well into their 50s, one just never knows.

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Floyd Mayweather proved his mastery of the medium again when he took to Twitter to savage HBO's third episode of the Mayweather-Cotto 24/7 docu-mercial series. "I want to apologize to all my fans and viewers who watched 24/7 last night," Mayweather Tweeted after the show. "I wasn't pleased with this weeks episode of 24/7. Me and my film team are providing Bentley Weiner with exciting content which she is not using. We really needed the producers from Mayweather-Hatton 24/7 to come back to HBO give the fans and viewers more excitement." No fighter knows what we keyboard tappers will latch on to, and perseverate on, than Money. He proved it time and again this year.

Floyd Mayweather had to be a juggler in 2012, as he battled Johnny Law in addition to in-the-ring foe Miguel Cotto, on May 5. Money got a stiffer test from Cotto than many expected, but he still left Vegas with that all-important 0 tucked under his belt. Floyd didn't let the looming gloom of a prison stint in Nevada for a domestic altercation yank him off the rails; by scores of 117-111, 117-111, 118-110, he upped his record to 43-0. Those waiting for a scrap after the scrap, a rumble between Mayweather and foe Larry Merchant, were left high and dry. The HBO analyst told the world that Floyd had apologized to him, and so they chatted amiably post-fight. Some pundits thought they saw decay in Mayweather, others didn't, but some facial nicks and bloody nose had most of us thinking that Floyd's money wasn't going to buy immunity from the most intractable of foes--the calendar. He turned 35 in February.

Ex HBO head Seth Abraham told us he thought the chance of Floyd gloving up with Manny was "zero" and that stance looked that much sharper by the end of the year.

The game plunged into the rabbit hole of PEDs in early May, when Lamont Peterson, who was to meet Amir Khan in a rematch on May 19 in Vegas, tested positive for excess testosterone. This development reached Morrisette-level irony, as it was Peterson who had demanded extra-stringent testing for the bout. Team Peterson protested that a doc prescribed testosterone to the boxer because he suffered from a low level. Furrow brows from cynics (realists?) resulted. Ten days before the scheduled bout, the plug was pulled. Promoter Golden Boy would soon go through another PED-fueled main event-demolition, and Victor Conte's Twitter followers would start jumping through the roof.

Manny Pacquiao pulled a Mayweather, and stepped in it, in mid May. The Congressman gave an interview to a pro-am writer, who had a Bible-pushing agenda. The writer asked Manny how he felt about gay marriage and the born-again hitter gave it a heavy thumbs down. A charged passage from Leviticus was cited, and Pacquiao had to explain that he didn't recite that to the writer. The boxer came out--LOL--and explained he didn't hate gays, and didn't see an erosion of his fanbase. His skills, that was another matter entirely, some said.

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Another name pugilist got caught in the rabbit hole, when Andre Berto's urine raised a red flag. On May 18, word came out that the Floridian used the banned steroid norandrestone ahead of his June 23 rematch with Victor Ortiz. They'd been slated to tangle Feb. 11, but Berto tore a bicep in training. Golden Boy immediately searched for a replacement and tapped Josesito Lopez to test Ortiz. Most figured Lopez would be a lower hurdle for Ortiz to leap but the kid never got the memo. Days later, Golden Boy also announced a replacement foe for Khan, post Peterson. Danny Garcia, they said, would get the gig. It was a good year for substitutes....Berto protested that his positive came as a result of his being contaminated, and said that the amount found in his sample was so minute as to indicate contamination. The cynics (realists?) wondered what supplement or tainted meat triggered the positive and when Berto would get to sleuthing, find it, get it tested to prove concretely his innocence, and share his findings with the press.

It was also a good year for the grim reaper, who worked OT collecting fight game notables. Johnny Tapia's turbulent existence came to a halt on May 27; "Mi Vida Loca" was a tortured soul on this earth, who used the ring, and illicit substances, to divert himself from dark thoughts and memories. The five-time champ's heart had enough, and stopped ticking in New Mexico. He was 45 years old.

The boxing career of Paul Williams came to an abrupt halt when the ex titlist had a motorcycle accident near Atlanta, Georgia on May 27. The crash left him paralyzed from the waist down, but if anything, grew his fanbase. The grace and good humor which Williams, age 31, seen in picture attending the September Canelo Alvarez-Josesito Lopez fight, displayed following the shocking scenario made all of us respect him that much more.

Floyd Mayweather kept his unbeaten record, but still took some lumps this year. He entered Clark County Detention Center in Nevada on June 1, to serve an 87-day sentence for a physical altercation with his ex galpal, and mother of his children, in 2010. He seemed relatively nonchalant about the stint going in, telling Dan Rafael: "Can't nothing break Floyd Mayweather. Whatever hand is dealt to you in life, you've got to deal with it.

Shane Mosley and Winky Wright, two Hall of Famers to be, both hung up the gloves in June, though Mosley talked comeback by the end of the year. Wright, so far, hasn't followed suit.

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Well, Manny won that one, the vast majority of us thought as the judges' scores were tallied following the Manny Pacquiao-Tim Bradley clash June 8 in Las Vegas. Not so fast, said CJ Roth and Duane Ford, who scored it for Bradley. "I don't think we're blind, I think that is a terrible, bogus decision," HBO's Jim Lampley said. "I'm dumbfounded," Manny Steward said. Stats backed the "Manny won" case; CompuBox had Pacquiao outlanding Bradley, 253-159, but maybe they liked Bradley's volume. He threw 839 punches to Manny's 751. Typical howls of fix and calls for investigations followed. Nothing came of it, of course. Bradley is still waiting for the rematch clause in his contract to kick in; his deal called for a sequel on November 10 if he won. Controversy in boxing...we're not dumbfounded.

Jim Lampley of HBO spoke our language when on his "The Fight Game" he told fans to "occupy boxing," and help force the change they want to see. His advice holds for the citizens of our whole nation, not just box nation....

Antonio Tarver joined Lamont Peterson and Andre Berto in the PED rabbit hole, testing positive for steroids following his June 2 draw against Lateef Kayode in California. The 43-year old went to Twitter to term the flagged specimen as a "false positive." He was suspended for a year and stuck to his claim that he didn't cheat.

Josesito Lopez was brought in to compete but not win, if we want to be honest about it, when he fought Victor Ortiz on June 23 in LA. Ortiz had a date to dance with Canelo Alvarez set up for September 15, so Ortiz just needed to get past the undersized welter Lopez. The memo musta got stuck in Lopez' spam filter. He smashed Ortiz' jaw and some accused the loser of being a quitter, citing recent history, but I held my tongue, as one who doesn't deal all that well with a splinter in my foot.

The chin isn't the topmost attribute you want to be an ace prizefighter...unless you don't have a good one, in which case it looms larger on the list of necessary traits. Amir Khan has blazing handspeed and can put together an XL combo with flashy quickness and precision, but he also has a built-in betrayer, an iffy chin. Danny Garcia on July 14 tested the Khan chin, and three times, the Brit failed the test. He hit the deck three times and the fight was stopped in round four in Las Vegas. Garcia, who subbed in for PED-ensnared Lamont Peterson, snagged Khan's WBA junior welter title. We wondered after, and continue to wonder, if Khan will make like Wladimir Klitschko, and refashion himself into a defensive wizard or if at 25 years of age, his best years were behind him.

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Scale Fails occurred too often this year and one of the biggest was Adrien Broner's in his fight with Vicente Escobedo. The Cincinnati superstar-to-be ruffled feathers in old-school types when he chose not to go the extra yard in paring down to 130 pounds. He was 133 1/2 at the weigh in, but rather than do sauna sessions and treadmill work, he said heck with it. The July 21 fight went on, Escobedo got some extra dough to soothe him and then he got stopped in round five. With so many weight classes, one wonders how guys are missing weights so often. This sport does leave you wondering a lot, doesn't it?

Floyd Mayweather got sprung from Clark County Detention Center on Aug. 3, after getting locked up June 1. About 20 family and friends, including 50 Cent and right-hand man Leonard Ellerbe, greeted Money, who sped away in a Bentley. We assessed him in the ensuing weeks, checking to see if he had been humbled, if he emerged from his stint a changed man. Nah; same Floyd. He showed off his stacks, bought his galpal pricey baubles and beefed on Twitter.

It looked like a pick 'em to many folks, but Andre Ward made those people look like prognosticatory punks, knocking down Chad Dawson three times, and stopping him in round ten of their Sept. 8 clash in Oakland. Dawson dropped down to 168 from 175 and evidently, in retrospect, that wasn't a smooth move. He didn't have the energy of strength at 168 that he did at 175, and in the following weeks a bit of the luster from the Ward win was erased. Still, no pundits didn't have the Oakland-based born again outside of the top three in their pound for pound lists after this result. Looking ahead, we now wonder if Ward isn't injury prone. He'll need surgery on an injured shoulder and that will scrap a fight against Kelly Pavlik, which no one was very pumped to see anyway. He had an injured hand going in to the fight before this one, against Carl Froch, and made it worse in that bout. This is now a pattern, unfortunately; Ward injured a thumb and pulled out of an 2006 HBO Boxing After Dark bout; hurt a knee playing hoops and had to put off a fight with Enrique Ornelas in summer 2008; re-injured his knee and had to postpone an April 2010 fight with Allan Green, in that chaotic Super Six tourney; busted a finger before his Nov. 2010 fight with Sakio Bika and went into the fight hurt; suffered a cut over his right eye in September 2011 which forced postponement of the Super Six finale against Carl Froch that October; said he hurt his left hand in sparring for the Froch fight, and broke the hand in two places during the Dec. 17, 2011 bout; and injured his right shoulder in camp for a Jan. 26, 2013 fight with Pavlik. Hey, boxing is a tough sport, to state the screamingly obvious. Let us hope we aren't deprived of the talents of Ward prematurely because his body simply isn't built for the vicious rigors of the sport.

Sergio Martinez gave Julio Cesar "Cheech" Chavez Jr. the business for the majority of the Sept. 15 middleweight clash, tried to lure the kid in to making a mistake so he could finish him off, and got caught. Down went Martinez, but the Argentine collected his senses and fought to the final bell. He came away with a UD12 win and left us hoping that maybe 2013 would be the year he could convince Floyd Mayweather to glove up.

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Brandon Rios won a Fight of the Year contender, bettering Mike Alvarado in California on Oct. 13. The rumbler Rios restored some of his rep with the gutty showing against Alvarado, who ate copious shots but protested when the ref saw enough. A rematch would make ample sense.

Danny Garcia nearly knocked Erik Morales' head into the upper deck at the brand, spanking new Barclays Center in Brooklyn, in the first boxing card at the rival to Madison Square Garden, on Oct. 20. The Philly fighter, in front of more than 11,000 enthusiastic fight fans, didn't know if the fight would go down, because the 36 year-old Morales ate some tainted meat, LOL, and tested positive for clenbuterol. The New York commission gave the Mexican the go ahead to fight when his third sample was clean. Once again, the sport got proof that it needs to come up with a comprehensive, united protocol on the issue of PEDs. On the brighter side, we like it when good things happen to great people, so it was sweet to see cancer-free Danny Jacobs back in the ring in Brooklyn. He is one of the top role models in all of sports, on how to handle adversity with class and toughness.

The largest, most unable-to-be-repaired hole was ripped in the sport when the universally beloved Emanuel Steward died on Oct. 25. We all hoped the Kronk sage would come out the other side when we heard he was in a hospital for a mystery ailment. Cancer, some said. Some family tried to control the news flow, and reassure us he was on the mend, but that was impossible, and sadly not the case, as Steward was the most positive soul in the sport, on everyone's best friend list. Aretha Franklin sang at his memorial service, and so many of his champions sat in pews, thinking about how this great man left a massive legacy on this earth. We still miss him.

Floyd Mayweather and 50 Cent took the last train to Splitsville, taking to Twitter on Nov. 3 to trade blows. Fiddy lobbed the first bomb when he wrote, "GAMBOA WANTS TO FIGHT FLOYD. I will put up a extra 20 million for the winner. He don't like it that Floyd pulled out" and "Ellerbee you a broke bum GAMBOA want to fight tell him to Floyd lace up. Lol" as well as, "GAMBOA is the truth, FLOYD no that, stop tricking and Fight." Floyd hurled a counterpunch: "A male boxing groupie.. hold my belts because your album sales have declined" and "I respect the shooter not the one who got shot." A couple days later, Fiddy said the beef was manufactured. He enters 2013 as a boxing promoter and Mayweather continues as the top draw in the game. Will those designations apply at the end of the year?

He combined flashy tactics, behavior and attire as well as just about any fighter, so the fight game was sad to lose Hector "Macho" Camacho to gunfire in Puerto Rico. The 50 year-old

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Spanish Harlem legend set the table for the Naseem Hameds, and Adrien Broners, and other boxers who understood that a shortcut to greater acclaim can be found in the packaging of the pugilist. Camacho always had a thing for fast living, but that didn't make his passing easier to bear. Sadly, he never reached a point where those instincts mellowed. RIP, Macho.

Ricky Hatton had to determine that there wasn't enough left to do the job like he needed to do it, so he hopped back into the ring after 3 1/2 years away. He looked OK against Vyacheslav Senchenko, but then got caught and was stopped out in round nine. The 34 year-old hero to the masses announced after that he was done, done, done. He'd climbed back from suicidal depths and substance abuse, and proclaimed his comeback a win. All agreed.

We wondered if this was a wise style matchup for the Puerto Rican standout Miguel Cotto heading in to the Dec. 1 clash at Madison Square Garden against Austin Trout. Turns out it wasn't; the New Mexico resident Trout boxed sharply and with smarts galore the whole twelve at MSG. A date with Canelo likely went down the tubes for Cotto, who looked like he made out with a jackhammer post-bout. Next year could be all she wrote for the Caguas resident.

Manny Pacquiao looked sharp, like old Manny, like a 25 year-old version of himself, when he met Juan Manuel Marquez for the fourth time in Las Vegas on Dec. 8. But an overhand right with a minute to go in round six dropped Pacquiao into la-la land, flat on his face. No mas for Manny.

JMM scored a knockdown in the third and Manny returned the favor in the fifth, when a left caused Marquez' glove to the mat. Manny fell into the Mexican's trap in round six, and out went the lights. Because he got his white whale, he climbed his Everest, I am picking Marquez to win a WOODSY, as Boxer of the Year. Yep, Donaire had a great 2012, but when I think back on 2012, Marquez' win, of such significance, done in such dramatic fashion, I will focus first on Marquez' feat. And yes, the WOODSY for Fight of the Year goes to Marquez-Pacquiao 4. Finally, Marquez gets to enjoy his name first when the duo are referenced. Looking forward, we wonder if Pacquiao can prevail again, or will he learn conclusively in 2013 that this chapter, as an active fighter, is done?

Another hole that cannot and will not be filled; our friend Larry Merchant, the always poetic and occasionally combustible analyst for HBO, announced that after 35 years, he was walking away from the cabler's color chair. Indeed, he did provide color, as when he and Floyd Mayweather got into it after Floyd beat Victor Ortiz. If Larry were 50 years younger, we'd get to enjoy 50

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more years of his top shelf work. Thanks for the entertainment, and insight, Larry.

And thank you readers, for being so loyal to TSS. We wish you a happy new, healthy, peaceful 2013.

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Radam G says:

Nice! Nuff said! Holla!

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Nice! Nuff said! Holla!

Carmine Cas says:

Great Article

brownsugar says:

So much happened I can't imagine anyone writing that article without looking at reams of archives... this article is just a well written condensed version of what happened,... if all the events in 2012 were expanded upon, it could fill an entire book. For a sport that's supposedly on it's last legs we got a lot of bang for the buck... I feel sorry for anybody who didn't have a TVO set up to record on all the days that 6, 7, 8, and sometimes 12 fights were being broadcasted on the same night. (hbo, showtime, wealth, nbc, telefura, etc...) and this year the new prospects from last year can finally take off the training wheels and tussle with big boys. There's gonna be some broken hearts,.. and some Made Men, in the world of boxing in 2013..