

RICHARD SCHAEFER Doesn't Think HBO Should Let Arum Provide Most HBO Content

Written by Michael Woods

Wednesday, 20 March 2013 13:32



No, Richard Schaefer, the Swiss-born day-to-day head of Golden Boy Promotions, didn't do a spit-take when he got word that HBO didn't want to buy any fights put together by his company.

"Was it a shocker? Yes and no," the 51-year-old dealmaker told TSS in a phone chat Tuesday night. "I was not so surprised because I had no communication with (HBO boxing chief) Ken Hershman going back to November. But the way HBO went about it...It was rather strange. If I

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was running HBO I would just turn down offers from Golden Boy."

So, the posting of the edict in the public square, so to speak, did take Schaefer (*seen above, in a Hogan photo, listening to Bernard Hopkins in 2012*) aback. But he seems to have collected himself after the momentary shock. In fact, Monday night, the day the divorce papers were delivered, he turned off his cell phone, and went to check out Golden Boy boxer Victor Ortiz on "Dancing With the Stars."

"Victor did very well," said Schaefer, admitting that cell phones were confiscated at the DWTS facility, so there was no temptation to text on the sly, maybe when Andy Dick was waltzing. "Victor did very well. He was in the middle of the field."

So, it sounds like you weren't sitting around, licking your wounds all day? "No, life goes on," he said. "I don't have any ill feelings. Life just goes on."

Schaefer can be a pretty good politician when he chooses. You know how our Senators refer to each other as "my friend on the other side of the aisle," and "my esteemed colleague" and such? Schaefer, I offer, is in that mode when he talks about there being no ill will. I mean, he might be one of the most serene execs I've ever come across and truly is able to shrug off any hint of animus towards Team HBO... But he does manage to muster a bit of ire on the subject of rival Bob Arum, of Top Rank, who will now be the main provider, far and away, of content for HBO. When I asked Schaefer if fans will be winners or losers in this new arrangement, if the custody arrangement will have upside for the fans, he replied, "Fans have been winning. Will they keep on winning? If I were running HBO I wouldn't be giving over the wheel of the ship to Bob Arum."

Regular readers know I have my romantic side; the Libra in me seeks that basically everybody get along, that we all play nice together. I asked Schaefer if he didn't empathize with the fans who don't care about the promotional cold war, who's Kennedy and who's Kruschev, and obliquely pleaded for him and Arum to make nice, so a couple no brainer fights could get made, instead of being dismissed because the promoters hate each other more than any two fighters do.

"Boxing is not a league," Schaefer said. "Things play out publicly...You think that s--t doesn't

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happen in other leagues? You think there isn't fighting in the NFL when the owners talk about splitting revenues and Jerry Jones of the Cowboys argues for himself, because he's selling out his stadium, against those who are not selling out? You think that s--t is not going on there? You think that's not going on in corporate America? Of course it's going on, but unfortunately boxing is unregulated, so everyone sees more fighting going on. Fans want fights, and who cares what Schaefer or Arum wants, make good fights."

Good stuff, good points. Indeed, there is more transparency in the sport because you don't have a lord high commissioner turning the screws on dissenters, tamping down discord, and an army of flacks quelling chatter. This can make boxing seem infinitely more dysfunctional than the NFL, NBA, MLB or...no, not the NHL, those clowns have had two shutdowns in the last ten years. But boxing may be no more dysfunctional than the other sports, it just plays out more publicly. Yes, the dysfunction can be glaring when you get a situation where a Top Rank guy should be fighting a Golden Boy guy (cough Donaire-Mares cough) but doesn't because the dealmakers can't stomach each other. But there actually aren't THAT many fights that aren't happening because the Hatfields and the McCoys can't just get along long enough to hash out a deal to give the fans, who pay out of pocket way too much to follow their sport, what they damn well deserve. Also, the transparency, the lack of the centralized authority, is part of what makes the sport fun to cover and so spicy. Arum spouts off, Oscar lobs a bomb on Twitter, and there is no commissioner to call for peace and quiet. The boxing business is a most American model; everyone is freelancing, there is no central office coordinating, it can feel unstructured and chaotic. Much like a democracy, eh? Meanwhile, us keyboard tappers watch and report and analyze. And let us not forget, if the NFL teams had to negotiate with each other to determine what games would be played when, do you not think that there would be massive rumbles on a daily basis? Yes, boxing is a beast unto itself, and has a business model that is sometimes head-shaking, and infuriating, but provides no shortage of drama.

Schaefer seemed to be in a mode of acceptance Tuesday night, but fighting pride still bubbled to the surface. He said that with the Golden Boy stable, which he said draws "no argument" is the best out there, it is easy to put on compelling fights. I then threw some of the criticism that floats about at him, and asked for comment. Isn't there a hesitance in pitting Golden Boy fighters in against each other, and could the new deal exacerbate that? "We're putting these guys in against each other," he said. "Canelo vs. Trout, Floyd against Guerrero...you have Garcia against Judah (Writer note: Though I don't believe Judah is a Golden Boy fighter). I look ahead, and it's the best schedule in existence we've had. I'm adding the numbers up, we've sold over 50,000 for these events so far. This is what fans want to see."

And of the criticism that Al Haymon holds too much sway over Golden Boy, and that is a main reason why HBO filed those divorce papers? "That's totally false," Schaefer said. He brought up the argument that Haymon's guy Andre Berto got too many "gimmies" on HBO. "Three of them

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were fight of the year candidates," the promoter said. "Berto is one of the most exciting fighters on any network. To have Berto on your network is a gift. Look at the track record of the programming AI has helped HBO get in the last ten years. HBO did pretty darn well associating with Golden Boy and AI. Some people now argue that Showtime has better boxing programming, perhaps rightfully so, than HBO. So, did HBO suffer during their alignment with Golden Boy and AI? Are they better off now?"

My take: That will remain to be seen. Let's check back in three, six, 12 months. Maybe it is better that things are out in the open, that HBO forced all cards to be put on the table. This is a new age of transparency, after all. If I write an article, and screw up a fact, or my thesis sucks, you guys will call me on it in the comment section. The interactivity forces the content provider to up their game, in theory, anyway. Now everyone knows who is aligned with who, and that makes the scorecards easier to fill out. As always, I ask for pick 'em fights, the best fighting the best. I know I won't always get that, because these guys have to balance, as cunning capitalists, risk vs. reward, and building up attractions incrementally. I frankly think the whole lot of them can do better at doing that, across the board. As always, however, I remain optimistic, because I know there is no shortage of athletes ready, willing and able to showcase what you saw Saturday in the Provodnikov-Bradley fight: will, skill and drama, round after round.

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deepwater says:

Think you are confused about capitalism. When the market is rigged by inside players in position of power it is a form of fascism /socialism /communism. Most boxing fans don't want to watch fights that should be off tv on an undercard but are instead forced upon us by certain players. Do you really think fans want to see Thurman fight a bum or Sam watsons sons talking junk in every camera. Laissez-faire capitalists believe that the market should not be constrained by government interference, and that companies should be free to hire-and-fire whomever they wish. Taxes should be low, government activities should be kept to a minimum, but there should be little in the way of a welfare state or safety net. Freedom at the possible expense of equality. Communists believe that governments should run everything, control the means of production and ensure equality for all by government control. Equality at the possible expense of freedom. Free the boxing world from the crony fascists. Free market capitalism will save boxing. Music industry boxing industry drug industry are in the same triangle and are all connected.

Radam G says:

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Amen, Deepwater! Holla!

SouthPaul says:

I ain't never heard a single word uttered by The Watson family on either HBO or Showtime. They mug it up a lot but always in a pretty respectable behind the scenes manner. Anyhow, Richard shouldn't have any ill will because it was his own duplicity that likely got him and his company their pink slip. Word around the boxing campfire is; Ken Hershman isn't the most patient of men. Obviously he must've grown tired of both Al and Richard's lack of genuine bargaining knowing they have a very chummy relationship with Stephan Espinoza, one that goes much deeper than the norm.

Radam G says:

Boo Hoo! A sound of dodo! I've been hollering about the sneakiness of Dick Schaefer for six years up in this Universe. Go for cheddar cheese, not Swiss cheese. On ev'ybodee and dey mamma GBP Dıçk is puttin' da squeeze. And thee shall definitely see da con and dat dropshot bulljive sooner before later. Three months before six or 12.

In the words of the New York Don(puto69) who haven't checked into the Universe in a minute, "You heard it here first. Holla back, ladies!" Holla!

deepwater says:

Ever been at a major fight with credentials? Go behind the scenes. And hear the small talk and watch the action. Watch the handshakes . Paulie malignaggi might even tell you about the stuff behind the scenes. Sam Watson and his camera hungry boys don't know jack about boxing. Sam Watson and his sons keep an eye on the fighters for al Haymon. They hook it all up. And it has nothing to do with boxing

SouthPaul says:

Deepwater

As a matter fact, yes, I've been behind the scenes. I've been to about 25 fight cards just in Sin City alone. Talked to all sorts of insiders, been ringside ...rubbed shoulders with nobodies and somebodies. I've even interviewed both Bernard Hopkins and Shane Mosley back in the day. Not as a journalist but more of a hobby. I've been up in Big Bear at both De la Hoyas fight compound on a few occassions as well as the gym Shane trained at before he too got his own cabin up there. Not bragging here, just answering your question. I am completely aware of all the shady stuff that likely goes on behind the closed doors. Even mentioning that I think it's a bit over the top to sit here on a message board and make comparisons to the boxing mafia and the Al Haymon and the Watson Bros. You've got nothing really to substantiate those claims other than your opinion. From what I know of Al he's an educated man who worked himself thru college then got into the music business as a promoter and not fast forward to current times. He started off with one single client by the name of Vernon Forrest. From there he slowly builds a

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roster of fighters he now represents. So, let's keep it in perspective, wasn't like he just strolled in off the hardened streets and started extorting fighters. As of now the man has a clean track record. Maybe you're used to seeing assistants who resemble Jane Brady or Betty Crocker which may explain why you're so agitated by the Watson Bros?

brownsugar says:

Deep I like the your catch phrases ... fascist, free market capitulism, communism..etc... they give the pretense of an intelligent preamble but they're used way out of context on this topic. To suggest that All Haymam is distributing drugs and prostitutes backstage during an HBO production is the most inaccurate accusation I've ever heard. Hayman is a Harvard grad who made his fortunes during the 90s managing some of the hottest R&B acts in the business. I could see your subplot playing out if it were Don King or if Warren Specter was promoting boxers but Hayman comes from a completely different ilk of advisor/managers.

I also think your wrong about Thurman. Personally I enjoy watching new talent develop....and neither Javek or Quintana were scrubs... they were solid tests that Thurman passed admirably.

To this very day I'm not understanding why some folk get so obsessed over the presence the Watson brothers in the prefight corner. These guys are nearly 30 years old and serve as gofers behind the scenes catering to their charges needs before the fight. If they're smart maybe they'll inherent greater duties when Watson passes the torch or they simply fade away...but its hard to imagine that they aren't being groomed for greater responsibilities.

Overall I think the shakeup will force GB to produce more competitive fights while reducing the incubation period for their new prospects. It's not like Schaefer didn't know he was playing with fire by jumping Canelo over to Showtime when Chavez Jr got that coveted June HBO date instead last year.

Also how unharmonious can a business relationship become when Schaefer is threatening to jump to Showtime when he can't get his way? GB will be fine as they cerrently have the deepest stable in boxing....and I'm sure Arum will be working hard to catchup

I've already purchased the GGG fight and will definitely buy the Guerrero/Floyd fight.

We have a party at my place when ever Floyd fights and I've never had any regrets and everyone gets home safely. I don't go to bars so the home front is the only option. Once somebody almost got there car towed and I paid the Tow guy \$50 to drop the hook.

BTW I'm putting \$100 on Guerrero.... then I'm cutting services till September. You can get great deals and perks by switching services an demanding rates reductions because of the new deals cable companies initiate after you sign up.. if you escalate they will always transfer you to a "deal maker" who will try to keep you happy. I renegotiate about every 90 days.

SouthPaul says:

Those opening comments were definitely out of context and had me scratching my head. Deep

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occasionally reminds me of the John Goodman character in Big Lebowski. When he drifts off into the Vietnam rants for no apparent reason... the Dude is like ...WTF are you talking about, Walter !?!?! Lmfao.

deepwater says:

Al doesn't deal drugs. The watsons don't deal drugs. Other people do that. The drug dealers are on the music scene and boxing scene.

deepwater says:

I didn't mean watch the handshakes because baggies are being handed off. I meant watch the handshakes to see who knows who. If you don't think drugs are at the highest levels of boxing and the highest Level of music then you guys are nuts.

dino da vinci says:

@ Deep. As you know, there is a certain atmosphere at fights that has people shaking hands with people that they wouldn't want to share a cab ride with. I know that I've done so, because of whom I was standing with at the time (due to a sense of obligation or simple good judgement). I've shaken hands with people who know that I don't necessarily care for them or for their business principles/ethics. It is understood that you are to be a gentleman in a high testosterone environment where everybody feels that they and theirs are the toughest guys in the room. It's called respect...for both yourself and for the sport.

brownsugar says:

[QUOTE=deepwater;27503]I didn't mean watch the handshakes because baggies are being handed off. I meant watch the handshakes to see who knows who. If you don't think drugs are at the highest levels of boxing and the highest Level of music then you guys are nuts. Donny Lalonde ,sugar ray, Duran ,camacho, pernell,gatti,Chavez ,de la Hoya,hatton,calzage, Floyd mayweather sr ,Michael nunn, Ricardo Williams , ect . Haymon and Watsons are legitimate but they are part of the game of flashy big money and part of the flashy big money game attracts the criminal element . My rant earlier was too much. My apologies[/QUOTE]

Drugs are available in any environment where people have more money than they know what to do with. I know personally because my cousin was a very productive player for the Cinncinatti Reds..until he had to be replaced.

But thanks for the comment Deeptoo few people these days are courageous enough to man-up to an error in judgement. And we all do it.

Classy post Dino... you don't post much but they are always a pleasure to read.

deepwater says:

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[QUOTE=dino da vinci;27507]@ Deep. As you know, there is a certain atmosphere at fights that has people shaking hands with people that they wouldn't want to share a cab ride with. I know that I've done so, because of whom I was standing with at the time (due to a sense of obligation or simple good judgement). I've shaken hands with people who know that I don't necessarily care for them or for their business principles/ethics. It is understood that you are to be a gentleman in a high testosterone environment where everybody feels that they and theirs are the toughest guys in the room. It's called respect...for both yourself and for the sport.[/QUOTE]

that is true. I am talking this way I was at judah garcia conference. known players were there mingling. besides hogging the food at the buffet sam watson started bragging how these n---s in bk act like they never seen money,and they arent the only ones with guns.then went on to brag about the bentleys he copped. he was also mentioning how he has his hooks with some rb artists.so I have seen watson in person bragging about guns and bentleys while keeping suspect company. again its all speculation and I crossed the line but drugs run rampant at the highest level of boxing. ask goldie de la hoya

SouthPaul says:

Speaking of De la Hoya . Supposedly there's no ill will yet he's been making all sorts of condescending and sarcastic remarks on Twitter. Perfect place for his punk *** too, doesn't have to struggle and force that fake *** joker smile of his.

SouthPaul says:

Also, finally figured out who the blonde is in a lot the Hbo and Showtime post fight shots. She, too, is Al's assistant. I once saw her down at the Mandalay Bay pool. Not a bad looking gal. She was lookin' a bit yummy. I won't drop her name on the message boards but if she's reading Holla'!