

Espinoza Talks Floyd-Khan, Floyd-Garcia, Floyd in Brooklyn

Written by Michael Woods

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Showtime boxing boss Stephen Espinoza was the recipient of copious compliments during the Tuesday media luncheon held in NYC, featuring Floyd Mayweather talking about his superlative effort against Canelo Alvarez on Sept. 14. Mayweather and advisor Leonard Ellerbe both made sure to tip their hat to Espinoza, the former Golden Boy attorney who replaced Ken Hershman at Showtime in November 2011, amid some grumbling from critics who didn't like the optics of the ex GB counselor getting the Showtime gig. The grumbling has subsided, and Espinoza is drawing solid marks for overseeing a program which has offered a bevy of thrillers during this year of boxing, especially.

I picked Espinoza's brain at the luncheon, seeking intel of what sort of content the cabler will offer in the home stretch of 2013, and beyond. "We'll probably have three more dates," the boss told me. "Things keep shuffling, and we're looking for some dust to settle to see how things play out."

He did say we will get a card at Barclays Center on Dec. 7, but that the principals weren't cemented. It looked like Zab Judah might get the gig, facing off with Paul Malignaggi, but that isn't in the cards. An Amir Khan-Devon Alexander scrap, seemingly forever in gestation, seems to be crumbling, with the grapevine whispering that Khan is looking at other options, maybe waiting for a lotto-type scrap in 2014. Yes, the dust on that date is still swirling...Espinoza said he didn't want to confirm or delve too deeply into that Dec. 7 event before terms were cemented.

Espinoza said some other up in the air matches include a Abner Mares-Jhonny Gonzalez rematch, and an Alfredo Angulo-Erislandy Lara sequel.

Of course, with this most expensive building block being Floyd Mayweather, Espinoza has to be pondering what's next for Floyd. I probed for a hint, at least. "We're always cognizant of Floyd," he said. "We try to think ahead, to an extent, six to nine months, or longer. That goes for Floyd, and everyone. We don't like to find ourselves in dead ends with matchups."

It feels to me like Amir Khan is in the passenger side seat for the next Floyd tussle. So I asked Espinoza what he thought of a matchup between Mayweather and the Brit, who is seen in many

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circles as having solid building blocks, his hand speed being top tier, but also an iffy chin, which I think could help sell a Floyd fight, for those craving a KO by Floyd. "I like that fight for next May, or any other day," Espinoza told me. "It's an intriguing matchup, because of Amir's skill, and hand speed." And that chin issue, how does Espinoza view that? "I think it's unfair," he said. "In the Marcos Maidana fight (in 2011), he took shot after shot. And he was caught by Danny Garcia, a very hard puncher, and that's no shame." He said that Julio Diaz, who put Khan down in round four of Khan's last outing, a UD12 win on April 27, can crack as well, and was a motivated vet who was on message that night.

Espinoza touched on the guy who seems to a top option in the minds of fans, Danny Garcia, and what a Mayweather-Garcia promotion might look like. "With Danny's dad Angel, it would be a fascinating event!" he said. Espinoza didn't have a time frame on when we might get a better idea on Floyd's next date, which is slotted for Saturday, May 3, 2014, place TBD. "Floyd is going to take some time off, and we'll probably not get into it for a couple weeks," he said. Espinoza sounded confident that the next event will also be immense, that there won't be a letdown if the "B side" doesn't have the momentum of buzz that Canelo had coming in. "Floyd's popularity is still growing," he noted. "And is he too good? Alabama was dominant last year, and no one lost interest. A Floyd fight is a spectacular event. When Tiger Woods was so dominant, people didn't say they wouldn't watch because he was so good. It's a treat to see someone so skilled."

I told Espinoza that selfishly, this Brooklyn resident would love to see Mayweather fight in Brooklyn, a couple minutes from my residence. "It couldn't be more convenient," he said, chuckling. Floyd during the luncheon said he loves Vegas, and all the possibilities for partying there. Does Espinoza think a Floyd-in-NY event is possible? "I think it is plausible," he said. "Floyd likes to zig when people expect him to zag. That would be superb. I don't think it's out of the question."

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