

Could Cold War Thaw Bring Hopkins-Stevenson? Or Even Hopkins-Ward?

Written by Michael Woods

Thursday, 24 October 2013 16:30



It is dangerous to engage too much in the "what if" game in the world of boxing. We all know one punch can upset well-laid plans, so to speculate excessively on what might occur in the near future, let alone a good deal down the line is a fool's errand. But to play the fool every now and again is a nice change of pace...so with that in mind, I asked Golden Boy day-to-day boss Richard Schaefer on Wednesday afternoon at BB King's in NYC, before the Bernard Hopkins-Karo Murat presser kicked off, what might happen WHEN Hopkins beat the 30-year-old Iraq-born German resident whose best win is a MD over Gabriel Campillo in 2008.

I tossed some names at Schaefer, including Haitian-born Canadian Adonis Stevenson, and Russian banger Sergey Kovalev. Both have been doing their thing for HBO of late, and most of you reading this know that HBO and Golden Boy are in a Hatfield-McCoy, or Jenner-Kardashian, place right about now, so I wondered if that would affect a possible deal with Hopkins, an integral part of Golden Boy who has stepped up this year to take a more public role as an executive.

"HBO had decided earlier this year to take a break in our relationship," Schaefer said. "Last I checked that break is still going on, they're going their way and we're going ours but in process we had the best year ever, and we established Showtime as certainly their equal if not the leader." (NOTE: Mr. Nielsen might take issue with that statement, from a numbers perspective. Audience wise, HBO has shown 18 of the top 20 bouts on cable in 2013. And Showtime could point to a 30% pop in viewership for boxing events in 2012, and another 30% pop to date in 2013, year over year. So there is much room for debate, I think it's fair to say, on this subject.)

"But there are names out there..I could see against Hopkins-Stevenson from Canada, that would be very interesting," Schaefer continued. "Bernard is a big name in Canada, and it could be a pay-per-view event. I could see Bernard against some of the 168 pounders, between 168 and 175 there are plenty of names who could become attractive opponents. At the end of day, Bernard is the name and we may have to put some money on the table and shake the tree. The last time I checked the guys over there (at HBO) don't make all that much money. We'll see after this fight what the landscape is. My goal would be pay-per-view event with Stevenson, or see what else is out there."

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Schaefer's reference to "168" got me thinking about other possibilities apart from Stevenson, who holds the WBC 175 pound crown. (He defends it on Nov. 30 against Brit Tony Bellew in Quebec. Kovalev fights the same night in Quebec, defending his WBO light heavy crown against Ukrainian Ismayl Sillakh. Both bouts will screen on HBO.) So I reached out to Dan Goossen, the man who promotes the king at 168, Andre Ward.

Dan, could we maybe see a showdown between Ward, who comes back after an injury layoff on Nov. 16, against Edwin Rodriguez, and Hopkins? Or would Ward's long affiliation with HBO--he not only fights on the cabler, but also works the analyst chair for some of their shows--gum up the works for that faceoff between old and young(er) master?

"I can't speak on Richard's behalf," Goossen told me, "but I've wanted to do that fight. I remember seeing Bernard at the Ward-Froch fight (in December 2011), and telling him this is a pay-per-view fight. Let's see how Bernard does this weekend, but I'm always on board on that fight, Bernard knows and Andre does."

And again, could the Andre-HBO relationship prove a fatal impediment?

"I can't address that at this stage," Goossen said, "but our sport is looking to do the biggest and best fights for the fighters, and whatever impediments exist, we're always try to get through them. Andre will return on Nov. 16, and once that happens, a lot of things will be answered more precisely.

"If Hopkins is victorious and Andre looks as good as we anticipate, despite any naysayers (speaking to a ill-suited style matchup), this is a fight with a lot of interest. Who is gonna beat Hopkins? Who's gonna beat Ward fight?"

More "what if" fun...I'd be curious to know at what weight a Hopkins-Ward fight might be contested at. Would "making" Ward move to 175 benefit Hopkins? Schaefer mentioned options at 168, does that mean Hopkins would dip down to Ward territory, and fight under 170 pounds for the first time since 2005? Hopkins seems to be keen on at least entertaining the notion, considering he's told us he'd carve down to 160 for a Floyd Mayweather fight, as "absurd" as

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that notion seems to some.

Lot's of material, a bunch of "what if" stuff to keep us entertained on Twitter for at least 20 minutes, friends. Share your thoughts, in the TSS Forum, and on Twitter.

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SouthPaul says:

The relationship will remain in permafrost status but I could see a situation where Hopkins jumps ship for a bit if the money is right. Hopkins has no problem being that guy if it is to his advantage. He did it with Lou Dibella back in the middleweight tournament, so, it's quite possible he will do it again.

amayseng says:

agreed SP, also it could happen if it is Hopkins last fight. I do not think dlh would hold it against him if he is hanging them up for good. hopkins is an asset to gbp.

this cold war has began to get to me, there are so many good fights out there not happening because of it.

Radam G says:

All is fair in love and war. Nothing surprises me in seedy, shady boksing. Holla!

SouthPaul says:

Its bothersome but it's also created a competitive rivalry that's generated plenty a good bouts. I think both promotional companies have stepped up their game trying to out shine the other.

Im positive there's a plan to try to drive Top Rank into the ground. That conspiracy involves GBP's, Al Haymon management, Floyd MAYweather JR Inc., & Stephen Espinoza. Both Richard Schaefer and Mr Espinoza are very good at smiling and laughing it off in front of the

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media but they're both snakes agitating and manipulating things behind the scenes.

Of course no need to feel overly sympathetic for Bob Arum, he too brings plenty of bad rep to the situation. Point is, it ain't all his misdoings.

The Shadow says:

Hopkins is becoming a casualty of the war. HBO is trying to freeze B-Hop out even though he's the Mailman when it comes to premium cable ratings.

They're setting up Stevenson-Kovalev, then Ward for the next two years, knowing B-Hop will be gone by then.

HOWEVER, Stevenson is VERY adamant about fighting Hopkins so it may happen on PPV in Montreal. I hope it does. I don't see where B-Hop could jump ship to.

Hopkins has too much to lose by selling his stock in GBP for a \$2.5m payday.

brownsugar says:

They are all equally a bunch of crookshanks.

But its Bhop who doesn't want it.

Always claiming to be too much of a friend or an enemy to fight the best guys.

Now he expects folks to tune in to the Murat fight.

I'd rather watch a replay of the walking dead.

Hop can do whatever he wants.. Fight who he wants.

Stevensen ...Ward ... and Kovalov want desperately to retire the Ancient Trooper.

While Hopkins marks out boundaries...and makes up reasons for not making certain fights happen or feigning interest while not following thru.(Kovalov)

He needs to take on one of the above fighters or retire with full honors while he can.

The Good Doctor says:

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I think that is where the problem lies. HBO is wanting to brush him off and they think in two

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years he should be gone. However, they said the same thing two years ago, and two years before that and two years before that. They have no idea how to get rid of Hop and on top of that it is difficult to see when the end is. Of the three guys listed above, I think he has legit shots against Kovalev and Stevenson. I think Ward would maul him but seems like I remember him telling Ward while he was broadcasting at the end of one of his fights that he did not want to face him. Correct me please if I am wrong but I am almost sure that happened.

Carmine Cas says:

I am pretty sure Hopkins did say that he did not want to face Ward, almost acting like a big brother or father to him. Ward would have the greatest chance of beating Hopkins

amayseng says:

I hope hopkins does not fight ward, ward will be carrying the torch for usa once floyd is gone and hopkins retires, if he ever does. ha

i would barely favor ward over the 49 year old hopkins, but i just think it is unnecessary.

after Murat i want to see hopkins beat Froch in England and Retire as champion, although i understand why he has reservations about fighting there and being robbed.