

## Boxing Was Naughty and Nice In 2013

Written by David A. Avila

Wednesday, 01 January 2014 18:36

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2013 was a good year.

Looking back at what adventures pro boxing graced us with, the consensus from many a journalist has been it was one of the better years, if not the best one yet in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

A number of highlights and lowlights took place the past 12 months, from more drug testing snafus to even more judging missteps. From more fight shows on the East Coast to less boxing cards on the West Coast, from better shows on one network to less on another network, and despite an ongoing civil war between promotion giants, the sport of boxing thrived.

### Testing

Drug testing for performance enhancement drugs finally was accepted by most of the major promoters. In the past several years, only Golden Boy Promotions had their title fights and its participants drug tested for PEDs. Last year, Top Rank joined the club and had its fighters tested too.

Juicing by athletes continues in all sports. Boxing saw many of its top stars undergo testing in 2013 and most passed. Baseball was not so lucky and the NFL will soon see that most of its athletes are juiced too. Boxing has taken the proper step and thankfully so. Several boxers lost their lives after fighting in the ring, including Frankie Leal. It's too dangerous a sport to have any boxer juiced.

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One group that should be tested more frequently is the female boxers. Juicing has been going on with female boxers for quite a while. Just because they are women doesn't mean they don't juice. One female fighter, who recently switched from boxing to MMA, had tested positive. No female fighter has died from injuries sustained from a contest, but women need to be tested too.

### **Boost in the East**

A boom in boxing took place with many more major shows taking place especially at Barclays Center in Brooklyn, New York.

Atlantic City had always had its share of boxing cards but in 2013 the new Brooklyn venue hosted a number of major fight cards including Paul Malignaggi vs. Zab Judah and the same Malignaggi vs. Adrien Broner.

Brooklyn finally has a house.

The effect of moving many cards to Brooklyn was that Las Vegas saw a downfall in boxing cards, thus leaving the door open to UFC's MMA cards.

One security guard at the MGM in Las Vegas complained that it was a bad year in that venue. She was unaware that many cards had been shifted to Brooklyn, where five shows took place in 2013. In the past, many of those shows would have gone to Las Vegas, including Malignaggi's and Bernard Hopkins vs. Tavaris Cloud.

### **Fight town**

San Antonio was another locale that saw a major boost in fight cards. Starting with a Saul "Canelo" Alvarez fight moving to the Texas city, it soon proved to be a major discovery for Golden Boy Promotions. More than 50,000 showed up to see Canelo fight Austin Trout in a junior middleweight unification bout at the Alamodome. Sure they only paid \$20 or less, but to

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have 50,000 people show up was an incredible showing for the boxing world. That success allowed Golden Boy to move Broner vs. Maidana from Las Vegas. Ticket sales were not doing well in the casino capital so in a bright move, the fight card was transferred to San Antonio where it was received quite well. It's no longer a cow town, it's a fight town now.

The mostly Latino crowd saw Argentina's Maidana upset the nefarious Broner to take the WBA welterweight title from the Cincinnati kid. It also witnessed Keith Thurman beat up Mexican tough guy Jesus Soto Karass. Its own southern Texas hero Omar Figueroa is on the verge of winning a world title in 2014. When that happens it should be explosive in San Antonio.

### **Television wars against females**

The emergence of Fox Sports 1 has brought even more boxing to American viewers. It also provided more boxers to gain visibility. But only male boxers benefited. It seems there's an unwillingness to provide a slot to female fighters. Not even one slot was available to female fighters this past year on Fox Sports 1, Showtime or HBO.

A discrimination against female boxers seems to be in play, and it was especially evident in 2013. The three television networks mentioned above and ESPN, NBC and others, did not or would not air one single female bout.

It's not that women fighters nor their managers did not ask, they just were not obliged. One gripe from television networks and promoters is that they are not ticket sellers. True, but you cannot be a major ticket seller without television. Even with television backing some fighters couldn't fill a McDonalds restaurant with fans. Just take a look at Guillermo Rigondeaux or Austin Trout fight draws. They are great fighters but they do not sell tickets even with television backing.

Women boxers were ostracized by all of the networks and major promotion companies in 2013. It wouldn't be a surprise to see someone open a lawsuit against any or all of the boxing heavyweight networks.

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The worst is HBO. They refuse to even talk about it. One of the representatives who was steadfast in his refusals was let go by the network last year. But it still has not showcased a female fight in decades.

### **Judging the judges**

It's impossible to please everyone when it comes to judging. But uniformity in judging should be mandatory if boxing, or MMA for that matter, is to thrive and progress.

One of the worst examples took place in California where Mexico's popular Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. fought Brian Vera and was awarded the win by unanimous decision. It was a shock to most of the fans there and those watching on television.

It was a case of Vera throwing many more blows and landing many more blows than Chavez, who resorted to pot shot rights and occasional left hooks. Vera connected much more than Chavez but lost the fight big. This type of fight also took place between Paul Malignaggi and Adrien Broner in June. That contest took place in New York and in almost the same scenario, the guy (Malignaggi) landing more blows, did not win. Was it a robbery in either case?

Judges need to discriminate between a pot shot that lands with hurting force and a pot shot that merely lands like a soft jab. One fighter, Erislandy Lara, is a master of the pot shot with no force and wins most of his fights that way. It's more quick than painful and probably couldn't hurt anyone above flyweight, but judges like to see those clear blows. All judges should be smart enough to refrain from giving an entire round to a pot-shotter instead of the busier fighter attacking the body and head.

One boxing legend once told me "landing a combination is a beautiful thing" and I agree. That is much more difficult to do than landing a pot shot. Stop counting pot shots for more than they are worth, unless that pot shot results in a knockdown or the fighter is wobbled and hurt from the blow.

### **Best judges of 2013**

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***These are the people you want judging or refereeing a big important fight.***

Max De Luca, Pat Russell, Lisa Giampa, Raul Caiz Sr., Julie Lederman, Fritz Werner, Tom Taylor, Ray Corona, Jerry Roth, Raul Caiz Jr., Jack Reiss, Patrick Connolly, Marty Denkin, Duane Ford, Jose Cobian and Patricia Jarman.

### **Best referees**

Pat Russell, Tony Weeks, Raul Caiz Sr., Kenny Bayless, Tom Taylor, Jack Reiss, Vic Drakulich, Ray Corona, Steve Smoger, Benjy Esteves Jr., Lou Moret, Robert Byrd, Wayne Hedgepeth, and Eddie Cotton.

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#### **the Roast says:**

Great picture. Holla!

#### **Radam G says:**

Good stuff. Holla!

#### **Jpjaco says:**

Mike, nice article with one exception: in his fight with Angulo, Lara busted him up pretty good and made him quit. Your comment about Lara not being able to hurt anyone above flyweight seems disrespectful to both fighters and not based in reality. What do you know that I don't?

#### **the Roast says:**

Speaking of Angulo, I'm reading that he will be fighting Canelo next now that Cotto wants Sergio. Should be a fun fight for however long it lasts. I guess you could say that about Angulo

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vs anybody though.

### **amayseng says:**

It will be interesting to see how Canelo deals with that constant Angulo pressure and how his stamina holds up.

Both fights are intriguing.