

Martinez-Cotto NYC Presser Report, Part 1: Arum Thunders Next To Mella DiBella

Written by Michael Woods

Tuesday, 11 March 2014 15:54



They are two certified characters in a sport, and a world, which is losing them, because conformity is rewarded, and dissent discouraged all the more in an economic context dominated ever more so by fewer and fewer large entities.

Lou DiBella and Bob Arum, two Brooklyn-born dealmakers, sipped coffee and chatted, and at times, especially with Arum, thundered about the fight they are co-promoting on June 7 at Madison Square Garden, which pits two verified stars, Miguel Cotto and Sergio Martinez in an almost-middleweight tussle.

It will be shown via PPV by the HBO, to those who wish to see it but can't attend what will certainly be a sold out event. Yes, a buzz was vibrating at MSG on Tuesday, during a press conference to herald the early summer faceoff.

DiBella sat down with select press, and talked about the fight, how it came to be made, what kind of chances his guy Martinez, possessor of a most stareable face, a Hollywood-ready visage marked by lines appropriate for a 39-year-old man, but none of the features, the mashed nose, the lumped scar tissue over the brows, which announce "prizefighter."

The promoter, who is keeping fingers crossed that his dad bounces back from pneumonia in short order, and fielded well wishes from those in the fraternity who know how he treasures his parents, said that the scrap was announced earlier because...well, he wasn't sure why.

"It had nothing to do with us," he said. Basically, Team Cotto held up the works because they

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jostled for a couple contractual and procedural edges. "When Cotto is sitting down in the ring it won't matter," he said, referencing Martinez' promise to drop and stop the Puerto Rican vet by round nine.

DiBella expressed mild annoyance about the negotiations, stating that money matters weren't too hard to hash out, but Cotto proved a stubborn sort when it came time to sift out billing and such minutiae as placement on posters. "We gave more edges than he deserves," Combustible Lou said. But, he allowed, Cotto is a massive draw in NYC around the Puerto Rican Day parade.

As for the Argentine Martinez, DiBella tips his guy to be the better man, but he showed admirable candor in not trying to proclaim that Martinez has undergone a full-body overhaul, including a magic wand session which makes his right knee 100%. He's had three surgeries on that pesky saboteur, and DiBella said that his guy lives in a chronic state of pain. But, he said, the boxer is rip-roaring ready to defend his 160 pound crown, and is at around 165 pounds as we speak.

"He's never taken any hits to the head, his face looks prettier than when he started," DiBella said.

Dark clouds have formed in the boxers' eyes when thinking back to an incident in Mexico, about 3 1/2 years ago, when Martinez met Cotto at an event. He went to shake hands with the PR legend, and Cotto, he says, blew him off. That stuck with him, and he'd like to make Cotto pay for the affront, which Cotto says he doesn't remember.

You can trust 99% of what the promoter says when he enthuses, as he did Tuesday, that, "They're gonna throw down. It's gonna be a real fight. Both are gonna throw down, it's who they are."

At that point, Arum came into the room, and inquired about DiBella's dad. The 82-year-old, who first promoted a massive event at MSG in 1970--it was a Muhammad Ali-Oscar Bonavena fight--got a coffee and listened to DiBella answer queries before hopping in.

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DiBella made it clear that he thinks it's silly that the contract calls for both men to weigh 159 pounds or less, being that the middleweight title is up for grabs. Cotto got that concession, hoping to get Martinez, the bigger man, closer to his playing field come fight night. The guess is that Cotto knows Martinez' knee is still rounding into shape, and every way he can make him work, and drain him pre-fight, he will work toward.

Arum surprised me by calling the catchweight "stupid," and made clear he thinks it's silly for the fight to be at 159 pounds.

"It's a power trip," he stated.

The same case could be made for the fight to place who's face on the left side, the "better side," on fight posters. Cotto, the better draw, but not the title holder, received that honor, something that at the end of the day will likely matter very little.

Arum drew chuckles when he noted that he can't be the hypocrite on the issue, as Manny Pacquiao will get the left side treatment over a champ, Tim Bradley, in their rematch April 26.

DiBella said he hears some of the Twitwits calling for Martinez to fight WBA 160 pound champion Gennady Golovkin, but he stuck to his guns, saying that Golovkin isn't a big drawing card, and besides, Sergio could make more money fighting other foes if and when he gets past Cotto. He said that Golovkin, unless he fights maybe Julio Cesar Chavez Jr., isn't a PPV draw.

"Who's Sergio ducked?" he asked rhetorically. "Sometimes guys just don't intersect."

Arum chimed in, and said that Golovkin's drawing power and fanbase is still a work in progress. He said that he hasn't been embraced by all Russians and is more so a Kazakh treat.

I brought up the issue of potential PPV exhaustion. I'm all for people making money, I'm no commie, dammit, but I don't think fans should have to keep emptying their wallet to buy

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premium content when they already pay extra for the premium cable channels. Arum countered by saying that different segments of the population buy different PPVs, so he expects the June 7 will perform quite well. Also, he repeated the old standby that many people pitch in and crowd living rooms, so the cost per person is actually quite low. I'm still waiting to see the stat breakdown and market research which cements that stance. How many people you know ask people to chip in \$5 or \$10 at PPV parties? Exactly....

Arum said he thinks the Cotto-Martinez PPV could exceed the buy numbers enjoyed by the Chavez Jr.-Martinez bout, and I dare say I agree. The vet promoter said an MSG sellout will juice the PPV numbers and reminded all that "this is still New York, still the media center of the world."

All involved agreed that this PPV will provide a better bang for the buck, and a much more evenly matched bout than the May 3 Floyd Mayweather-Marcos Maidana tussle, that is clear.

Arum, ever candid, and today intermittently quite feisty, took aim at the Golden Boy crew. He thinks their Canelo-Angulo PPV did poorly at the box office, he said, and thinks that fewer than 6,000 paid full price to see them fight live. The promoter veered into cantankerous territory when I asked him about the possibility for an end to the Cold War, with the rumor mill churning out stories of Oscar De La Hoya's supposed rift with Richard Schaefer. Arum virtually exploded that the press wasn't doing their proper job, asking the more pertinent questions about how Golden Boy and Showtime is running their programs, and called for more Woodward and Bernstein type efforts. I'm Woods, I countered, not Woodward, and do the best that I can, so there. Arum also seemed to be down on HBO boss Ken Hershman, and voiced his dismay at a decision which I'm pretty sure hasn't been made yet, that of who will stand across from Ruslan Provodnikov in his next tangle. Arum has his POV and that doesn't jibe with Hershman's, seemingly. Basically, Arum is a master at such jockeying and can sometimes obtain a concession or change of terms on the strength of a desire for mollification. Short story long, he maintains that such decisions are holding up the pairings fro Juan Manuel Marquez' and Provodnikovs' next bouts.

While captive, I asked Arum about Mikey Garcias' next; the kid has been a NY mainstay, and he didn't blow anyone away in his last showing, against JC Burgos. It was a win, but many of us are hoping he secures a foe and a fight to bring the best out of him. Yuriorkis Gamboa has been pitched as that guy but Arum said that fight is DOA.

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"It's not gonna happen," he said. "Who the eff is Gamboa? He effed me in the Rios fight," Arum said, referencing a late-inning pullout by the Cuban a few years ago. Arum said that a match pitting Garcia against WBA champ Takashi Uchiyama could be in the cards.

Arum said that the blossoming of Macau as a platform opens up things for him, for guys like maybe Garcia, or Guillermo Rigondeaux or Miguel Vazquez, who get turned down by HBO, but have belts and skills. Arum said that Top Rank will be back in Asia on May 31, in July, in perhaps Singapore in September, and back to Macau in November.

Nonito Donaire was turned down by HBO, he said, so he will land overseas, and hope to build back his rep. Also, Arum is jazzed about an end of June date, his first one, on the mainland in China, in Shanghai. Rigo could get a July date over yonder in July he said, and that would likely be it for him and Top Rank.

Arum talked up a new boxing magazine show, a two hour production, which will run in China once a week, on Tuesday nights, starting in May. More people will likely watch that, he said, than watch the Super Bowl. He also was salivating at the thought of his guy Zou Shiming winning a title, and then getting a promised audience with the leader of China. HBO too should be licking their chops at the thought of luring all those new boxing fans, Arum said.

Arum said he will visit the Congressman, Manny Pacquiao, next week, and said that Coach Roach reports Manny "looks great." He said that he's happy to note that reports of Manny's fine form are uniform, even from those who usually veer negative.

More Top Rank stuff--Arum had dinner on Monday with WBC diamond belt 175 pound champ Jean Pascal in NYC, and came away impressed with his smarts. He might put Pascal in against Julio Cesar Chavez Jr., at 175 pounds, maybe at Cowboys Stadium. Gennady Golovkin is also in the mix for that July date, which will be another PPV. Arum thinks the press will push for a Chavez-Golovkin bout, and I agree.

160 is no longer possible for Junior, Arum opined, just as 140 is a bridge too far for Brandon Rios, he said. Arum said that he thinks Juan Manuel Lopez, fighting Saturday in Puerto Rico, should retire, he said.

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I could go on another 2,000 words, but must make dinner for my kids...

Check back in a bit to hear what the fighters, Cotto and Martinez, had to say Tuesday in NYC.

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Skibbz says:

I hope martinez makes cotto pay.. As a fighter you can (and should) do everything to gain an edge over your opponent but Cotto will look like a fool when he's beat my maravilla. Talking of Gamboa and Mikey, Gamboa was going on today saying that he's willing to sign a contract to fight Mikey Garcia for FREE so long as the fight is in Miami.. Doesn't look like Arum is interested in giving Gamboa a dime anyway so maybe it'll all work out eh?

amayseng says:

Good article Mike.

Gamboa has been on the shelf forever, he has ruined his career.

I am going with Sergio and a stoppage of Cotto, mid to late, busted up.

HBO turned down Nonito??????????

Thoughts out to Lou's father.

Carmine Cas says:

DiBella didn't seem too happy at the presser.

It's funny, a few years ago when Sergio was calling out Mayweather and Pacquiao at 150 Bob Arum said that Martinez should fight Golovkin or Pirog, now he says that Golovkin does not

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have the popularity yet. Maybe he was just appeasing the down in the dumps DiBella, but I think at this stage in his career the great Maravilla should only go for the biggest money bouts available.

Paging Dmitry Pirog?????

Bob Arum is a funny dude, very amusing, still very witty at his old age

deepwater2 says:

Hey I was just looking at the "possessor of a most stareable face" and noticed something, its fat . Unable to do roadwork is a serious obstacle to overcome . At 39 years old after numerous injuries , some very hard last couple fights it might be a good idea to put some money on cotto at home . Looking forward to a good fight and I must say the ticket prices are pretty cheap for a fight of this magnitude . If possible every person on here should try and make it if close to ny. I was going to make a quip about communism but in my new found style I will instead mention a favorite quote from my favorite author ."Your genuine action will explain itself, and will explain your other genuine actions. Your conformity explains nothing"- Emerson

brownsugar says:

Agreed... Its not looking good for Martinez...too bad fighters fighters can't get a shot in the knee like NFL Players...

Radam G says:

Sergio Martinez coulda fought in Sin City. Xylocaine is legal there.

He could've shot himself in the knee/knees, just as Money May shoots dat syet in his brittle mitts before every bout.

Maybe the powers that be "In the city that never sleeps" will give SM a waver to xylocaine juice up that ragged-jive knee, so that the bout can last a bit longer. Otherwise, Miguel Cotto is going to beat SM down and kayo his reconstructed-knee arse in the middle round. Holla!

amayseng says:

I am considering heading to this fight. Prices are very reasonable.. Its the NYC hotels, flights and the such that add up.

deepwater2 says:

Damn. I'm going to drive up for the boxing hof weekend I can't go to this fight. Trinidad and dela Hoya are getting in. I plan on gambling a bit at the turning stone and going to the gala reception with my wife. I plan on stopping at the ommegang brewery on the way up there . These two were my favorites so I will try and watch the fight at grazianos with some boxing people .

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Otherwise the garden is the best place to be for this fight . If turning stone lets me bet I will put some blackjack winnings on cotto.

Carmine Cas says:

I'm going with somebody is getting knocked the fudge out!

dino da vinci says:

[QUOTE=deepwater2;45443]Hey I was just looking at the "possessor of a most stareable face" and noticed something, its fat . Unable to do roadwork is a serious obstacle to overcome . At 39 years old after numerous injuries , some very hard last couple fights it might be a good idea to put some money on cotto at home . Looking forward to a good fight and I must say the ticket prices are pretty cheap for a fight of this magnitude . If possible every person on here should try and make it if close to ny. I was going to make a quip about communism but in my new found style I will instead mention a favorite quote from my favorite author . "Your genuine action will explain itself, and will explain your other genuine actions. Your conformity explains nothing"- Emerson[/QUOTE]

I like the new softer, gentler almost squeezable D2. Not that the very edgy, borderline insane D1 wasn't pretty cool as well. Just sayin'.

deepwater2 says:

[QUOTE=dino da vinci;45471]I like the new softer, gentler almost squeezable D2. Not that the very edgy, borderline insane D1 wasn't pretty cool as well. Just sayin'.[/QUOTE]

Thanks man .