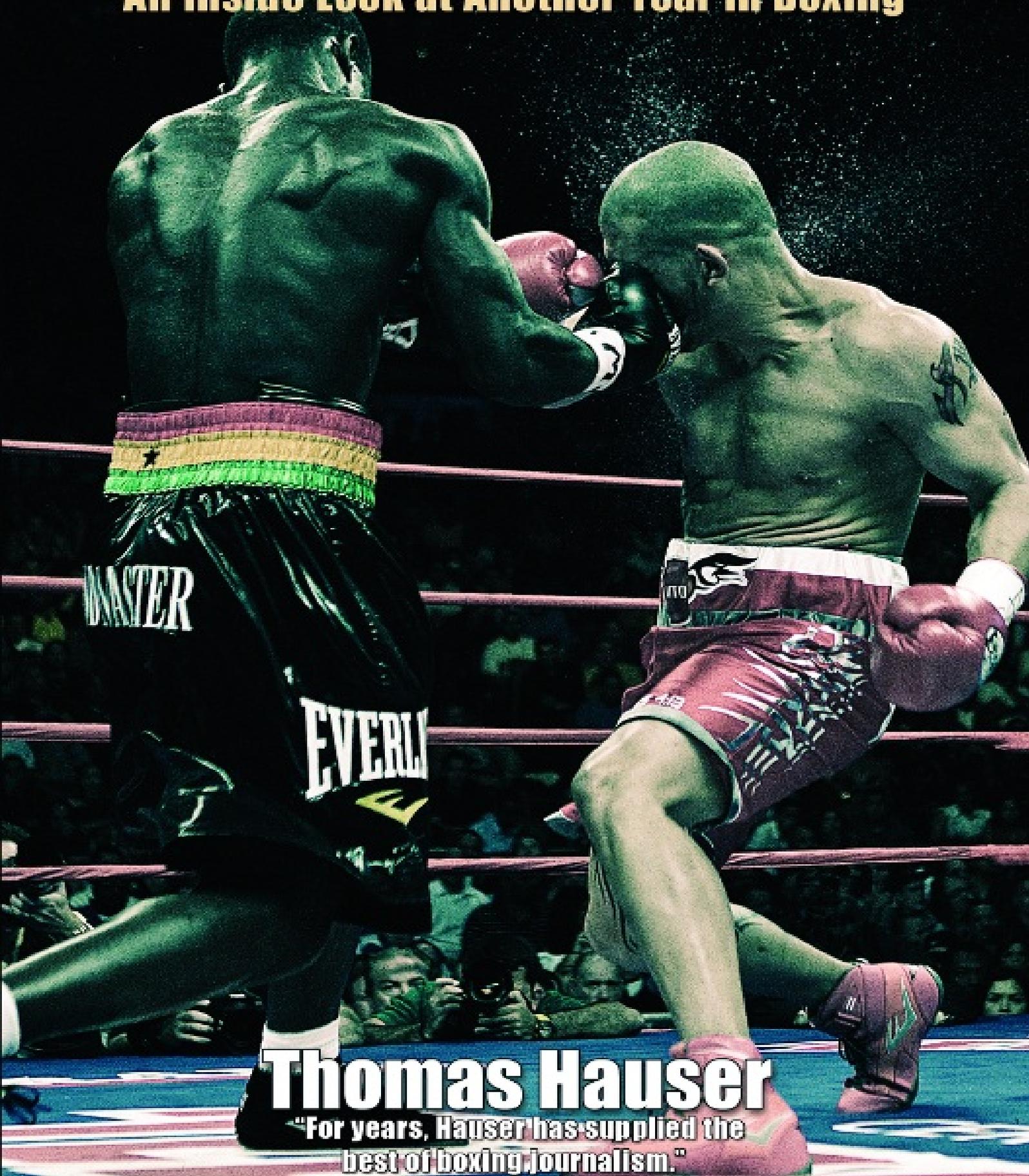


STRAIGHT WRITES AND JABS

An Inside Look at Another Year in Boxing



Thomas Hauser

"For years, Hauser has supplied the best of boxing journalism."

—*Booklist*

Straight Writes and Jobs

BOOKS BY THOMAS HAUSER

GENERAL NON-FICTION

Missing
The Trial of Patrolman Thomas Shea
For Our Children (with Frank Macchiarola)
The Family Legal Companion
Final Warning: The Legacy of Chernobyl (with Dr. Robert Gale)
Arnold Palmer: A Personal Journey
Confronting America's Moral Crisis (with Frank Macchiarola)
Healing: A Journal of Tolerance and Understanding
With This Ring (with Frank Macchiarola)
A God To Hope For
Thomas Hauser on Sports

BOXING NON-FICTION

The Black Lights: Inside the World of Professional Boxing
Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times
Muhammad Ali: Memories
Muhammad Ali: In Perspective
Muhammad Ali & Company
A Beautiful Sickness
A Year At The Fights
Brutal Artistry
The View From Ringside
Chaos, Corruption, Courage, and Glory
The Lost Legacy of Muhammad Ali
I Don't Believe It, But It's True
Knockout (with Vikki LaMotta)
The Greatest Sport of All
The Boxing Scene
An Unforgiving Sport
Boxing Is . . .
Box: The Face of Boxing
The Legend of Muhammad Ali (with Bart Barry)
Winks and Daggers
And the New . . .
Straight Writes and Jabs

FICTION

Ashworth & Palmer
Agatha's Friends
The Beethoven Conspiracy
Hanneman's War
The Fantasy
Dear Hannah

The Hawthorne Group
Mark Twain Remembers
Finding The Princess
Waiting For Carver Boyd

FOR CHILDREN
Martin Bear & Friends

Straight Writes and Jabs

An Inside Look at Another Year in Boxing

Thomas Hauser

The University of Arkansas Press
Fayetteville
2013

Copyright © 2013 by Thomas Hauser

All rights reserved

ISBN-10: 1-55728-644-2

ISBN-13: 978-1-55728-644-4

e-ISBN: 978-1-61075-531-3

Library of Congress Control Number: 2013942079

For Anthony Catanzaro

Contents

Author's Note

Fights and Fighters

Sergio Martinez vs. Matthew Macklin: Good Fighters, Good Fight

Hopkins-Dawson II: The Champion

Pacquiao-Bradley in Perspective

Martinez-Chavez: Peaks and Valleys

Paulie Malignaggi Won't Go Away

Miguel Cotto Grows Old at Thirty-Two

The End of the Pacquiao Era

Archie Moore Revisited

Curiosities

Lou DiBella on Epix

Evander Holyfield on the Night Before Fighting Mike Tyson

My 86-Year-Old Mother Meets . . .”

Boxing Personalities Remember “My Greatest Moment in Another Sport”

Fistic Nuggets

A Letter from Emanuel Steward

Issues and Answers

The PED Mess

It's Sixty Seconds Between Rounds, Not Sixty-Seven

Bad Judging: A Case Study

Klitschko-Chisora: Sucker Slap

Chad Dawson's KO by

Fistic Notes

Ray Mancini for Real

Joe Gans Comes to Life

Ray Arcel: Behind the Façade

The Rise and Fall of Alexis Arguello

The End of College Boxing

Literary Notes

In Memoriam

Remembering Joe Frazier

Author's Note

Straight Writes and Jabs contains the articles about professional boxing that I authored in 2012 plus a more recent profile of Archie Moore. The articles I wrote about the sweet science prior to that date have been published in *Muhammad Ali & Company*; *A Beautiful Sickness*; *A Year at the Fights*; *The View From Ringside*; *Chaos, Corruption, Courage, and Glory*; *The Lost Legacy of Muhammad Ali*; *I Don't Believe It, But It's True*; *The Greatest Sport of All, The Boxing Scene, An Unforgiving Sport, Boxing Is, Winks and Daggers*, and *And the New . . .*

Fights and Fighters

In recent years, Sergio Martinez has become a writer's fighter.

Sergio Martinez vs. Matthew Macklin: Good Fighters, Good Fight

Sergio Martinez sat on a folding cushioned-metal chair, eating cashew nuts and sipping from a bottle of water. In two hours, he would enter a boxing ring to defend the middleweight championship of the world. Now, in a dressing room above The Theater at Madison Square Garden, he was engaged in quiet conversation.

Trainer Pablo Sarmiento, cornerman Russ Anber, cutman Dr. Roger Anderson, camp coordinator Marcello Crudelle, and manager Sampson Lewkowicz were with him.

The mood in Martinez's dressing room is constant from fight to fight. Organized, professional, relaxed until the final minutes of preparation when it changes to intense concentration.

Sergio held out his bag of cashew nuts to the others in the room. Anber took a handful.

Latin rap sounded in the background; the music of Rene Perez Joglar, who lives in Argentina and is friends with Martinez. Later, the sound would change to Calle 13, Sergio's favorite group.

At 9:30, Dr Anderson put cotton plugs soaked in adrenaline in Martinez's nostrils to constrict the blood vessels. Sergio's nose had been broken and bled profusely in his most recent fight. This was a precautionary measure. Five minutes later, Anderson removed the plugs.

Sergio's hands were wrapped. He gloved up, stretched, shadow-boxed, and hit the pads with Sarmiento.

New York State Athletic Commission inspectors Ernie Morales and Sue Etkin looked on.

Martinez is an athlete. He was about to engage in a high-stakes athletic competition. The difference between winning and losing could equate to millions of dollars in future earnings. The punishment he absorbed in the ensuing hours might damage him for life.

Yet one had the sense that, as a child growing up in Argentina, Martinez faced challenges on the streets that were as formidable as this one every day. Boxing enabled him to escape from a world of deprivation. It's a timeless tale with few happy endings.

"I rule my life by pleasure and necessity," Martinez said five years ago. "The pleasure of giving my life another life; the necessity of giving another life to my family."

And now . . .

"Martinez is one boxing story every aficionado should feel a sense of ownership about," Bart Barry has written. "He is not running for office in the Philippines. He does not have charges pending against him in Nevada. Martinez makes a match with a

larger man every time he defends his belts. He gets hit plenty and finishes each defense with a knockout. If there is a downside to having as boxing's middleweight champion of the world a Latino who both looks and fights better than Oscar De La Hoya, it doesn't spring to mind."

Martinez has struggled and fought honorably for what he has achieved in his life. The same can't be said of the people who run boxing's world sanctioning organizations and demean the sport with their sale of tarnished indulgences.

On April 17, 2010, Martinez won a unanimous 12-round decision over Kelly Pavlik to claim the WBC, WBO, and linear middleweight crowns. The WBO soon stripped him of his belt on a technical ruling that appeared motivated by the desire to collect a quick sanctioning fee for a "championship" fight between Danny Jacobs and Dmitry Pirog. But that was of secondary concern to Martinez. His focus was on the WBC title, which had special meaning to him because it was once held by the great Argentinean middleweight, Carlos Monzon.

Martinez was loyal to the WBC, and the WBC betrayed him.

After Sergio defended his title with a dramatic one-punch knockout of Paul Williams on November 20, 2010, the WBC orchestrated a slight of hand that saw him relieved of his title and given the right to fight for an overpriced "diamond belt." That cleared the way for Julio Cesar Chavez Jr (a favorite of WBC president Jose Sulaiman) to fight Sebastian Zbik on June 4, 2011, for what was euphemistically called the WBC middleweight championship of the world.

Martinez wanted his title back. After Chavez beat Zbik, the WBC promised Sergio that, if Julio were allowed to fight an interim defense against Peter Manfredo Jr, the organization would order Chavez to fight Martinez next. On November 19, 2011, Chavez beat Manfredo. Even then, Martinez vs. Chavez remained a pipe dream.

Meanwhile, Sulaiman further angered Sergio with an ugly comment about the treatment of women. After Floyd Mayweather Jr (who pays substantial sanctioning fees to the WBC) was sentenced to ninety days imprisonment as a consequence of being found criminally guilty of beating up a woman for the third time, Sulaiman said that Mayweather should not be stripped of his WBC title.

"Beating a lady is highly critical," Sulaiman decreed. "[But] it is not a major sin or crime."

Martinez is a vocal advocate for the protection of battered women. On December 29, 2011, he declared, "Just a few days ago, Don Jose made some controversial statements in reference to Floyd Mayweather's sentence for domestic violence. I know that he sent an apology, but I have the right to ask from Don Jose a public apology about the insensitive comments that he has said about the violence against women."

Then, in the same press conference, Martinez went further, renouncing the WBC diamond belt "for my dignity, for my pride, and for my manhood."

"Don Jose Sulaiman spoke to me," Sergio explained. "He asked me to move aside and to let Chavez fight Rubio on February 4. I was shocked. From then on, I felt like there was a knife that had been stabbed in my back. Don Jose said that I had authorized his decision. That's an absolute lie. I have not authorized that fight. That fight is the end of a lie. I won't represent the WBC again until they make the fight that is obligatory, the fight which was voted on by unanimous decision to happen at the WBC's convention. I'm not planning on defending the WBC diamond belt anymore. I

hate the cowardice that Chavez has taken on in avoiding every day the fight with me.”

Six days later, for good measure, Martinez told Radio Belgrano AM 950 in Argentina, “Nobody will forget that Chavez was the biggest coward in the history of boxing.”

In response, Sulaiman bellowed like a harpooned seal. In a January 24, 2012, column entitled “Hook to the Liver,” the WBC president wailed, “One of the feelings of sadness that kept me low for a few days was the reaction of Sergio Martinez, who blasted the WBC and me with his uncontrollable mouth when I had always thought of him as a gentleman.”

That same day, Sulaiman told FightNews.com, “As President of the WBC and a close friend of Julio Cesar Chavez Sr and his sons, I wish to emphasize that Julio Cesar Chavez Jr is in no way scared of Sergio Martinez. I know Chavez. He’s a great boxer with power in his fists and he’s a Mexican idol. The bout on February 4th between Julio Cesar and Marco Antonio Rubio will be a great bout full of courage and honor.”

On February 4, 2012, Chavez defeated Rubio over the course of twelve lackluster rounds that Sulaiman called a candidate for “fight of the year.”

“Sergio Martinez has class,” says Lou DiBella (Sergio’s promoter). “Jose Sulaiman doesn’t know what ‘class’ is.”

Meanwhile, Martinez needed an opponent for a March 17 date on HBO. Matthew Macklin stepped into the breach.

Macklin was born and lives in Birmingham, England. But he’s of Irish heritage, which on St. Patrick’s Day was a definite plus as far as selling tickets. He’s articulate, gracious, easy to talk with, and a good story teller.

One of Matthew’s tales involves Billy Graham, who rose to prominence as Ricky Hatton’s trainer and worked with Macklin for four years. Just before Hatton turned pro, Graham wanted to buy a house and went to a bank to take out a mortgage. The bank manager reviewed Billy’s financial records and told him that there simply wasn’t enough there to qualify for a loan.

“You don’t understand,” Graham implored the bank manager. “I’ve got this kid from Manchester. He’s eighteen years old. You have no idea how good he is. He’s going to be a world champion.”

Matthew also has a self-deprecating sense of humor.

“Why did you become a fighter?” he was asked.

“Because I was stupid. And by the time I got smart, I was hooked.”

Macklin came into the fight against Martinez with a 28-and-3 record and 19 knockouts to his credit. His most impressive performance was a June 25, 2011, split-decision loss against WBA middleweight beltholder Felix Sturm. The bout was contested on Sturm’s home turf in Cologne, Germany. Virtually every observer (apart from two of the judges) thought that Matthew won.

“I beat Sturm,” Macklin said afterward. “And I thought I won the fight clearly enough that I was beyond being robbed.”

But one learns to be skeptical about a fighter whose best credential is a loss, regardless of how unfair the decision might have been. And Matthew’s record was devoid of world-class scalps. As fight night approached, the odds favoring Martinez rose as high as 10 to 1.

Macklin did his best to put matters in perspective. “Sergio is the best middleweight in the world and the real middleweight champion,” he acknowledged. “He’s a good fighter. And over my years as a pro, I’ve had some up and down performances. But Sergio is beatable. The media has the habit of taking a guy with a few good wins and a few good knockouts and making him out to be invincible. I expect to win this fight.”

Still, Macklin faced a daunting task. He had to get through the early rounds. He had to get through the middle rounds. He had to get through the late rounds. And he had to find a way to win more than half of them or knock Martinez out.

The Theater at Madison Square Garden was sold out for Martinez-Macklin with 4,671 fans in attendance. Matthew didn’t just come to acquit himself well. He came to win. There were times when the action was fierce and the outcome of the fight very much in doubt.

Martinez’s most effective weapon in the early going was a punishing jab that snapped out like a serpent’s tongue and caught Macklin flush before Matthew could react. In round two, a straight left hand propelled Macklin back into the ropes, but it looked as though the champion was stepping on the challenger’s foot at the moment the blow landed.

The drama built throughout the fight. Macklin waged a controlled measured battle and was a hard puzzle to solve. After a slow start, he swept the middle rounds and was credited with a knockdown near the end of round seven when a chopping overhand right coming out of a clinch caused Martinez to touch the canvas with his glove. It appeared as though the cause of the “knockdown” was Sergio stumbling over Matthew’s left leg. Regardless, after seven rounds, Macklin was up by a point or two in the eyes of most observers.

He didn’t win another round.

In the eighth stanza, Martinez picked up the pace, fighting more aggressively. Macklin responded in kind. But the champion’s jab and straight lefthand were finding their mark with increasing frequency.

And Macklin was tiring. First in the final thirty seconds of each round; then in the final forty-five. He took Martinez’s punches well, but he was taking too many of them. And he was beginning to lose form.

“I figured I was behind by a few points,” Matthew said afterward. “If you lose, you lose. Whether you lose on points or get knocked out, you’ve still lost. I could have played it safe but I was trying to win, so I started taking chances.”

Martinez keeps his punching power late. When he goes for the kill, his smile turns to a snarl.

With twenty seconds left in round eleven, Macklin threw an arcing left hook and was floored by a faster straight left hand . . . He rose, wobbly . . . was floored by another straight left . . . rose for the second time . . . and was saved by the bell.

He returned to his corner looking very much like a beaten fighter. At that point, trainer Buddy McGirt wisely stopped the contest.

“He was getting hit with clean shots,” McGirt said later. “The only way he could win was by knocking Sergio out, and that wasn’t going to happen. There was no reason to send him out for more.”

The punch stats showed Martinez outlanding Macklin 183 to 135, with his

biggest edge coming in rounds nine through eleven when he landed 56 power punches. The challenger was good enough to test the champion but not to beat him.

“I gave it one hundred percent,” Matthew said afterward.

And so he did. Macklin did more than fight a courageous fight. He fought a good one. But Martinez had superior footwork and faster hands. His punches came from angles that were unfamiliar to Matthew. And Sergio hit harder.

The most pressing question now is who Martinez will fight next. One reason he’s so entertaining to watch is that, at various times in each of his recent fights, he has looked vulnerable. He starts well and finishes strong, but has shown a tendency to lose the middle rounds. If two hundred years of boxing history is a reliable guide, there will come a time when he is unable to rally late.

Sergio is a small middleweight. He weighed in for the Macklin fight at 157.6 pounds after eating full meals all week. Fighting at super-middleweight would be a mistake. If Julio Cesar Chavez continues to avoid him, there are other opponents (such as Dmitry Pirog and Gennady Golovkin) who could test him at the middleweight level. Several “name” opponents in the 154-pound ranks would also make for an attractive match-up.

In sum, Martinez is beatable. All fighters are. But he won’t go easily. Against Macklin, once again, he did what he had to do to win. For the fourth time in a row, after flirting with defeat, he closed the show with a dramatic knockout.

In the fighter’s respective dressing rooms after the fight, their faces told the tale.

Martinez was largely unmarked as he summarized the battle just won.

“Think . . . Relax . . .”

Sergio slapped his fist into the palm of his right hand . . .

“BOOM! . . . Over.”

Macklin’s face was a different matter. There were ugly bumps and bruises and a gash beneath his left eyebrow that needed five stitches to close. Sadness and disappointment were etched in his visage. So was pride.

“I got beat by a fighter who was better than I was tonight,” Matthew acknowledged. “If you get beat, you get beat. It’s better than being cheated. A month from now, the Sturm fight will bother me more than this one.”

Bernard Hopkins has said, "If you don't know how to control your emotions, that's a signed death warrant in boxing." Chad Dawson controlled his emotions when it mattered most—in the ring against Hopkins.

Hopkins-Dawson II: The Champion

Drama is keyed to the personal lives of the participants. Regardless of what the rest of the world thought, the April 28, 2012, rematch between Chad Dawson and Bernard Hopkins at Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City was high drama for Dawson and everyone who cares about him.

Dawson, age twenty-nine, was born in South Carolina and grew up in Connecticut. He's soft-spoken and laid-back with a gentle demeanor; a bit on the shy side with strangers, but talkative when he feels comfortable with someone.

"My father had seven children by the time he was twenty-one," Chad recounts. "I have four brothers and two sisters. None of us has ever been in jail. We might not be the smartest people you'll ever meet, but none of us has a criminal record. Our parents taught us to be good."

Chad and his wife, Crystal, have four sons ranging in age from eight to eight months.

"I enjoy being a father," he says. "I'm most happy when I'm in my house with my kids. When I was little, my father never took me to school. I take the three oldest to school every morning; pick them up after school too. Having kids made me grow up a lot. I'm a lot more responsible now than I was before. My brothers and sisters and I grew up poor. I don't want my kids not to have the things they need to live right, but there's a line you have to draw. I'm still learning how to say 'no' to them."

"It's hard to get me mad," Dawson continues. "I'm not an angry person. But some of the stuff that goes on in the world; I watch the news a lot and I hate it when I see people hurting other people, especially kids. I don't understand how a father and mother can hurt their own kids, but they do. I'm a boxer and a father, and I always separate Bad Chad Dawson from Daddy."

Dawson got into boxing at a young age. His father, Rick Dawson, fought professionally from 1982 through 1984 and compiled a 1-6-1 record. The guy he beat finished his career with 3 wins against 48 losses and 30 KOs by.

"My father took me to the gym when I was eight and put me in the ring with my older brother, Ricky," Chad remembers. "Ricky gave me a bloody nose, but it was no big thing. He did that at home all the time."

"This is just my opinion," Dawson says, choosing his words carefully. "But my father didn't have a good career and the truth is, I don't think he expected me to make it. He looks at me now, and I think he's saying, 'I was there; I could have done it.' All the things he wanted to do in boxing, I'm doing them now. And he says to himself, 'That should have been me.' He doesn't get as much joy out of what I've done in boxing as I'd like him to."

Prior to facing Hopkins, Dawson had beaten some good fighters; most notably Eric Harding, Tomasz Adamek, Glen Johnson (twice), and Antonio Tarver (twice). His one loss was a technical-decision defeat at the hands of Jean Pascal in a fight cut short by an ugly gash caused by a head butt above Chad's left eye. At various time, he has held the WBC and IBF 175-pound titles.

The knock against Dawson has been that he lacks the fire inside that makes a fighter great; that he fights like he'd rather be doing something else; and that he's as happy out-boxing opponents as he is blowing them away.

"I hear the criticism from the media," Chad says, "But most of it comes from guys who never put on a pair of gloves in their life, so I brush it off. You need the media. The media gives us publicity. The media pays our salaries. But except for that, why should I care what they say?"

Still, Dawson is prone to adding to the conventional perception of his approach to boxing with thoughts like, "When I'm waiting in the dressing room before a fight, I want it to be over . . . Training camp is hard for me. Most of the time, I'd rather not be there. One of the kids starts talking and I'm not with him to hear it; or there's something else I miss that's going on with my family . . . Right now, boxing is more of a job for me than anything else. I don't like stupid stuff, ugliness, greed, disrespect. And I've been in boxing a long time, so I've run into a lot of stupid. If I didn't have a wife and kids, I'd probably have given it up by now. But if I wasn't in boxing, I don't know what I'd do. Probably nine-to-five somewhere, go home at the end of the day, and not worry about getting hit. You don't want to get hit. It's a bad feeling."

"Boxing keeps you humble," Dawson adds. "As far as I'm concerned, it's not about becoming a big star or calling yourself a legend. It's about winning fights."

Bernard Hopkins is the antithesis of Chad Dawson. He loves fighting. As Robert Ecksel wrote recently, "Hopkins is monomaniacal. He's the sun around which all planets revolve. He's the black hole at the center of our galaxy whose gravitational pull sucks everything into its maw. Always referring to himself in the third person, it's Bernard Hopkins this and Bernard Hopkins that until one's head throbs from the intensity."

Hopkins turned pro in 1988 after a fifty-six-month stint in Graterford State Penitentiary. He lost his first fight and went on to craft a ring career of monumental proportions.

"I didn't plan what happened to me in boxing," Bernard says. "I planned to not get in trouble again. I never wanted to go back to prison. So I did things right and made myself the best that I could be, and great things happened."

Hopkins is very much into control in all aspects of his life.

"There's a lot of fighters that are as talented as me," he says. "There's some that have more natural gifts than me. But no one—no one, no one, no one—is more disciplined than me. Every fighter is hungry when he's poor. The great ones stay hungry when they're rich."

In the ring, Hopkins projects an aura of strength; both physical and mental. He talks like a street fighter. "I want to throw punches that hurt. When I hit someone, I want to be able to take some of your soul with me."

But he fights like a scientific one.

"Hopkins is precise," Bart Barry observes. "His motion is efficient. He does not

take two steps if one suffices. He strikes more than he punches. His fists go to the place he wants them. He hits you where he desires.”

“Bernard is not a football player,” adds Hopkins’s trainer, Naazim Richardson. “Bernard is not a basketball player. Bernard is a fighter. He’s one of the few out there today who has truly learned the craft of boxing.”

“I still love the fundamentals of boxing,” Hopkins says. “I still love the art of boxing. I still love the hit and not get hit in boxing. I still love that you can be aggressive but you can be aggressive smartly. It keeps my fire always burning.”

Hopkins is unique as a fighter in that he will be remembered more for what he accomplished in the ring when he was old than when he was young. His age was first weighed against him when he fought Felix Trinidad in 2001. Bernard was thirty-six; Felix was twenty-eight. Hopkins dominated from start to finish before knocking his undefeated foe out in the twelfth round.

There have been setbacks since then when Bernard’s age showed; most notably in losses suffered at the hands of Jermain Taylor (twice) and Joe Calzaghe. But one could be forgiven for starting a Bernard Hopkins birther movement; that is, demanding to see his long-form birth certificate to determine if he was really born in 1965.

“There’s nothing unique I’m doing other than what’s supposed to be done by anybody that has discipline,” Hopkins told Tom Gerbasi last year. “Yes, you’re seeing talent. Yes, you’re seeing genetics and a little bit of good fortune. But what you’re really seeing are the benefits of planting my crops; taking care of my life, my body, and my mind. I’ve invested in eating the best foods, staying away from drinking and smoking and partying. I’m like a luxury antique car that’s in the best condition you can find.”

Jean Pascal (who Hopkins fought twice) had a different view of Bernard’s success and asked that he be subjected to “Olympic-style testing” for performance-enhancing drugs prior to their second encounter. That led an enraged Hopkins to declaim, “When a guy says something about my legacy and my history; the things that were said were deeper than having a guy in my bedroom, in my house with my wife, butt naked. I can forgive that before I can forgive what he said. When a guy says something to me to discredit me and have people thinking, ‘Oh, this thing that he’s done all these years is now under question’; yes, the ambulance will be right by any fight that happens. There will be one there, and don’t be surprised if he’s in it. I’m coming for him and he better be ready. We’re going to war. Emile Griffith and Benny ‘Kid’ Paret.”

That said; Hopkins declined to submit to the testing. His promoter, Golden Boy (which has championed “Olympic-style testing” for several recent Floyd Mayweather Jr fights), was silent on the issue.

Bernard wants to be regarded as a superstar and legend on the order of Jim Brown, Bill Russell, and Satchel Paige. Hence, the Hopkins mantra: “The reason that a lot of great basketball players who are in the Hall of Fame never got a ring is Michael Jordan. The reason that a lot of great fighters never got a ring is Bernard Hopkins . . . Tell your granddaughter, your grandson, your kids, that you’re watching a person in this era like when Ray Robinson was in his; Ali was in his; Ray Leonard was in his; because this is the legacy I leave . . . I’m motivated by history; what other people did in the past and what history will say about me when I’m gone. When you get a taste of

history, it's like being a drug addict. You can't let go."

A handful of fighters have crossed over into the public consciousness in the United States since Muhammad Ali left center stage. Sugar Ray Leonard, Mike Tyson, George Foreman, and Oscar De La Hoya head the list. Manny Pacquiao and Floyd Mayweather Jr come close but aren't quite there. As for Hopkins; let's be honest. Bernard could walk through Times Square tomorrow and most people would have no idea who he is. He's a big fish in what has become the small pond of boxing.

Let it also be said that, while Hopkins purports to shake off criticism the way a duck shakes off water, he is, as Bart Barry notes, "fantastically preoccupied with others' opinions of him."

Still, Bernard is on solid ground when he says, "There's people who hate me, but they respect me. I didn't kiss ass; I didn't sell out; I didn't buck dance. Nobody gave me anything. I fought my way to the top. I took it. I'm cut from a different cloth than other fighters."

That brings us to Bernard Hopkins vs. Chad Dawson.

They met in the ring for the first time on October 15, 2011. Prior to that fight, Hopkins touted his experience.

"You take my resume," he said at the August 9, 2011, kick-off press conference in New York. "You take Chad Dawson's resume. Harvard. Community college. Who are you going to hire? Experience counts. I'll go with the professor over the guy who just got his degree every time."

But when the fight came, it was a non-event. With twenty-two seconds left in round two, Bernard missed with a right hand, leveraged himself onto Dawson's upper back, and appeared to deliberately push his right forearm down on the back of Chad's neck. At the same time, he wrapped his left arm around Dawson's torso to steady himself and apply additional pressure to Chad's neck. In response, Dawson rose up and, using his shoulder, shoved Hopkins up and off. Bernard fell backward to the canvas, landed hard on his left elbow and shoulder, and lay there. Asked by a ring physician and referee Pat Russell if he could continue, he said only if it was "with one hand."

Initially, Russell declared Dawson the winner on a second-round TKO. Ultimately, the California State Athletic Commission changed the verdict to "no contest." That ruling allowed Hopkins to retain his Ring Magazine and WBC belts.

Bernard's partisans are fond of saying that their man has aged like fine wine. But on the night of Hopkins-Dawson I, the wine tasted like vinegar.

Antonio Tarver, who fought and lost to both Hopkins and Dawson, told FightHype.com, "Bernard reminds me of an old slick con-artist. This man didn't even attempt to fight. Look at the tape. Chad Dawson knew that he was going to take that out. He was furious that Bernard was trying to cop-out to an injury like that. You want to prove that you're hurt; I need to see an MRI. Where was the shoulder deformed? If you pop something out, you gonna see the bone sticking out of the shoulder. Bernard should have got off of the canvas and attempted to fight and not just hold his arm like he couldn't use that arm and like the arm couldn't move. He should have attempted to fight. He never attempted because his mind was already made up. He made the decision to lay on the canvas and cop-out to whatever shoulder injury he claims he had. I don't know how Bernard can live with himself, robbing the public like he did."

He put the mask on and stuck-up every pay-per-view buyer that night.”

Dawson was equally skeptical, branding Hopkins a “quitter” who performed his own personalized version of “no mas.”

“Courage isn’t crying and complaining and pretending you got hit low or your shoulder is hurt when things aren’t going your way,” Chad said. “A real champion gets up off the canvas and tries to fight. Courage is [Gabriel] Campillo getting knocked down twice in the first round by [Tavoris] Cloud and getting up hurt and fighting his way back into the fight. Bernard Hopkins is the opposite of courage. What he did to me in that fight; that was going to be my night and he took it away from me by play-acting and crying. I lost all respect for him that fight. I don’t like him, and I think he’s a phony.”

Give Hopkins credit in that he signed for a rematch. But Dawson’s antipathy remained; fueled in part by the fact that, as a consequence of Bernard claiming injury in their first fight, Chad was forced to accept the short end of a 70-30 purse split in Hopkins-Dawson II.

“I really don’t believe Bernard Hopkins was hurt,” Dawson said during a teleconference call to promote the rematch. “He said he dislocated his shoulder, but we didn’t see any weakness in his shoulder. We didn’t see any doctor’s notes or anything like that. I’m going to keep saying this; Bernard did not want to be in the ring with me that night. Maybe he undertrained and he didn’t expect to see what he saw. Maybe he needed more time to get in better shape. I don’t know; but I know what happened that night. I looked into Bernard’s eyes, and Bernard did not want to be in the ring that night.”

But nowhere was Dawson’s disdain for Hopkins more clearly on display than at Planet Hollywood in New York when the February 22, 2012, kick-off press conference for the rematch was held.

“I want to make one thing clear,” Chad told the assembled media. “I came to fight, and he pulled a stunt. Legends don’t act the way this guy acts. Legends don’t do the things this guy does. Legends don’t punk out.”

Then Dawson stepped away from the podium, stared directly at Hopkins, and challenged, “Don’t be a punk this time.”

As fight night approached, Dawson was a 7-to-2 betting favorite. The general feeling was that he was too fast and too strong for Hopkins to handle and that he was also a more confident fighter than in the past. One reason for his confidence was that he had reunited with trainer John Scully.

Scully fought professionally from 1988 through 2001 and was good enough to go the distance with the likes of Michael Nunn and Henry Maske. By the end of his career, he’d compiled a 38-and-11 record with 21 knockouts and one “KO by.” If one throws out the last ten fights on his ledger, it improves to 35-and-4.

“I loved fighting,” Scully says. “When you’re in the ring, even if it’s just a four-round preliminary fight, you’re the star.”

Dawson has made the rounds of trainers during his pro career. He started out with Brian Clark (who trained him in the amateurs). Clark was followed by Scully, Dan Birmingham, Floyd Mayweather Sr, Eddie Mustafa Muhammad, and Emanuel Steward. After a lackluster May 2011 performance against Adrian Diaconu, Dawson returned to Scully.