



THE BULLY PULPIT: CRAWFORD, POSTOL AND ARUM AND THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE JR. WELTERWEIGHT DIVISION

By: Bill Dwyre *

LAS VEGAS – Wednesday was yet another day of boxing fun and folly. There may be more colorful sports on the day of the actual competition. But there is none better than boxing during the run-up. These guys could make a turtle race sound like a Super Bowl.

Some of it was legitimate, even charming.

[Viktor Postol](#) of Ukraine, who will fight [Terence Crawford](#) of Omaha for the unified [World Boxing Organization \(WBO\)](#) / [World Boxing Council \(WBC\)](#) 140-pound title here Saturday night at the [MGM Grand Garden Arena](#), greeted reporters with the news that he was a new father, as of Tuesday.

“Twin boys,” he said, beaming.

Then, in the middle of the media session, his phone rang and soon everybody was looking, via Facetime, at a weary and smiling mom. There was Olga Postol, telling her husband from Ukraine, that the anesthesia was just starting to wear off.

He was quickly asked the usual sportswriter cliché question of whether or not this would affect him in any way in the ring Saturday night.

“It maybe gives me extra energy,” Postol said, “but I’m just happy that everybody (Olga and new sons Lukian and Timofey) is healthy. All I have to do now is win.”

Postol’s trainer, the famed Freddie Roach, weighed in on things by saying he measured his own confidence in his fighters by his willingness to make a bet on them. He said he would do that at the Sports Book on Postol.

“Odds against him are 6-1,” Roach said. “That’s outrageous.”

Crawford started his media session by assuring everybody he hated all interviews. Then he spent half an hour charming a room full of interviewers.

He has built a gym in North Omaha, and said he did that because, as a youngster, the closest one for him to use was downtown.

“I’d ride my bike down there,” he said, “and then, when I was done working out, I was too little and too tired -- and it was too far -- to ride it back home. So coaches drove me home.

“I work out in my gym now, but not at any set time. When I get there, the kids are just kind of fooling around. But when I start to work, they look at me and then they start to get to work. I need to be a role model. Kids need somebody to give them hope, to tell them they have some talent and some skills.”

He was quizzed about who taught him to switch, so effectively and often in mid-fight, from an orthodox right-handed fighting stance to a lefty approach.

“I taught myself,” he said. “The first time I did it in training, my coach yelled at me. Then I did it again and he yelled at me again. Then we got into fights and I did it and he yelled at me, but it worked and he saw that. Pretty soon, he said we need to work that into our training sessions.”

But it was left to the master of all boxing ceremonies, Top Rank Promotions Chief Executive Bob Arum, to top it all, as he always does. Wednesday of big fight week is also always final news conference day. Which means Arum has a podium and an audience. Only God knows what will ensue.

It always starts fairly innocently, with introductions of hotel officials and HBO officials and other boxing dignitaries. You always think, about halfway through, that this time has a chance to be normal, maybe even boring.

But no. Never.

Bob Bennett, executive director of the Nevada Athletic Commission and one of several on the dais as sort of official window dressing, unknowingly gave Arum the little nudge he needed. Bennett spoke of good things going on in the sports he and his organization sanction and regulate and he made the serious mistake of tossing in mixed martial arts with boxing. He said both sports are now cooperating with drug testing programs.

Bennett yielded the microphone back to Arum, the volume turned up and lights on the soapbox got brighter. MMA is the most direct competitor that boxing has and Arum likes the sport like a five-year-old likes spinach. He said that drug testing was nice but not all that necessary because boxers don't generally cheat. But as for MMA, "They aren't concerned with drug testing. Why should they be? Their results come out after the fights. By then, everybody has their money."

Then, with David Copperfield sleight of segue, he made it political.

"I'll give you a little (New Jersey governor) Chris Christie here," he said, gesturing above the audience like someone about to multiply bread and fishes: "Here. MMA. Guilty."

He quickly made sure that everyone understood that his anger for Donald Trump supporter Christie was Christie's Tuesday night convention speech attack against Arum's longtime favorite, Hillary Clinton.

Arum was followed to the microphone by the president of the WBO, a Puerto Rican lawyer named Francisco Valcarcel, who said what many were thinking: "You are my hero, Bob Arum. If I say what you say, I am in prison."

But in this state of Nevada, in this country of free speech, there was no holding back Arum. He ended the program with one last shot at Trump and the Republicans, referencing their decision to have MMA president Dana White speak at their national convention.

"Here we have this great intellectual analyst," Arum said, sarcasm dripping, "opining on the state of our country."

The proceedings wound down with more assurances that this would be a great fight and would certainly be worth HBO's \$49.95 pay-per-view price.

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**** This column was not subject to the approval of Top Rank. Any editorial usage of all or part of this column is welcome but must include credit to Bill Dwyre.***

Bill Dwyre will be writing a series of weekly columns on the Crawford vs. Postol world championship event. Bill was sports editor of The Los Angeles Times for 25 years, ending in 2006. He was a sports columnist for 9 1/2 years at The Times, ending Nov. 25 with his retirement. Boxing was among his most frequent column topics. Bill can be contacted at BillPatDwyre@gmail.com or via Twitter at @BillDwyre.

Undefeated junior welterweight champions [TERENCE "Bud" CRAWFORD](#) (28-0, 20 KOs) and ["The Iceman" VIKTOR POSTOL](#) (28-0, 12 KOs) will go mano a mano in a 12-round world title unification fight to determine the lineal king of the exciting 140 pound division. Promoted by Top Rank®, in association with Tecate, All Star Boxing and the motion picture "Hands of Stone," the Crawford vs. Postol [World Boxing Organization \(WBO\)](#) / [World Boxing Council \(WBC\)](#) / The Ring junior welterweight world championship event takes place ***This Saturday! July 23***, at the [MGM Grand Garden Arena](#) in Las Vegas and will be produced and distributed live by [HBO Pay-Per-View®](#) beginning at 9:00 p.m. ET / 6:00 p.m. PT. Remaining tickets are priced at \$304, \$204, \$104, and \$54, not including applicable service fees. To charge by phone with a major credit card, call **AXS at (888) 929-7849**. Tickets are also be available for purchase at mgmgrand.com or **AXS.com** (<http://bit.ly/24ORYhs>)

The pay-per-view undercard will feature two-time Mexican Olympian and undefeated No. 1 featherweight contender [ÓSCAR VALDEZ](#) battling undefeated No. 2 world-rated contender [MATÍAS "La Cobrita" RUEDA](#) for the vacant [World Boxing Organization \(WBO\)](#) featherweight world title,

former interim world champion **JOSE BENAVIDEZ, JR.**, risking his undefeated record and Top-10 world-rating, in a 10-round welterweight rumble against **FRANCISCO "Chia" SANTANA** and undefeated Top-10 contender **OLEKSANDR GVOZDYK** defending his NABF light heavyweight title, in a 10-round fight, against two-time world title challenger **TOMMY KARPENCY**.

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