



## **TERENCE CRAWFORD: READY TO ANNOUNCE HIMSELF AT UPCOMING DEBUTANT BRAWL**

**By: Bill Dwyre\***

Terence Crawford is in line to become boxing's next celebrated debutant. All the things are in order for his coming-out party July 23<sup>rd</sup> in Las Vegas. It could be a ball.

He won't be wearing a long gown. No corsage on his wrist. Just shorts and shoes and the tools of his trade, the boxing gloves with which he hopes to leave impressions on the face of Viktor Postol, and in the minds of a crowd of around 9,000 at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas.

If boxing could produce a list of who is next, Crawford would certainly be high on it. The likes of Gennady Golovkin (Triple G), Canelo Alvarez and Andre Ward have all had their big moments and made their big impressions. No debutants there. They have been to big dances and now are maneuvering for the top of the heap in the sport. Nothing new about them. They have arrived and become gold-plated. Floyd Mayweather Jr., says he's retired, and, surprisingly, he has remained that way. For now.

Manny Pacquiao said he was retired after the April victory over Tim Bradley. Few bought that, even with his impending Senator duties in the Philippines. The skeptics were right, as they usually are in boxing. Pacquiao announced this week that he will fight again, in either late October or mid-November. Suddenly, Terence Crawford's debutante ball in Las Vegas is high on the list of sports' big dances. That's because, in all likelihood, the winner will get to go toe to toe with Pacquiao.

Big exposure. Big money. A fox trot into the big time.

Twin that with the ever-present thirst for something new and compelling and it becomes clear that Crawford, the favorite to prevail against Postol, can become boxing's next emerging market.

In a conference call Wednesday, Crawford answered any and all questions about this sudden golden opportunity tossed in his lap by saying, about ten times, "I am only focused on this fight [Viktor Postol]. I haven't even thought about what comes next."

Indeed, and Donald Trump will soon make Ruth Bader Ginsburg his vice-presidential running mate.

Even before the Pacquiao situation arose, there were compelling factors about Crawford:

- He is a kid from Omaha whose nickname is "Bud" because his mother didn't like people calling him "Spud." He comes from a rough neighborhood in that Nebraska city and got in trouble a lot as a younger man. He even got shot in the head in 2008, while he was parked under a street light in Omaha, counting the money he had just won shooting craps under that same streetlight.

"It was like \$20, \$40...pow," he tells an Omaha TV interviewer.

He drove himself to the hospital, calling his family along the way to let them know what had happened.

- He has a bit of a baby face, with sleepy eyes, and a smile that lights up the room. He is friendly, well-spoken, except for lots of verbs that don't agree with nouns and reflect a somewhat typical inner-city education. He is friendly to the press, open and not the least-bit mysterious. He is also, at age 28 and 28 fights into his pro career (28-0 with 20 knockouts) fairly savvy about the ways and means of a major fight promotion.

"I want to be a worthy successor to Manny Pacquiao and Floyd Mayweather," he says, showing respect for his sport's history and its recent greats, while also elevating himself to their level by implication.

He also says, for those boxing fans who hate the nice-guy approach to a fight, “After July 23, my record will be 29-0, with 21 knockouts.”

- Depending on how you look at it, and how you read certain situations, Crawford might be a candidate for sainthood. Or for San Quentin. That covers the territory for most boxing fans.

He reconnected a couple of years ago with his favorite grade school teacher, Jamie Nollette. She told him she was traveling frequently to Africa, to places such as Uganda and Rwanda, on humanitarian and fact-finding missions. He said he wanted to go along and has done so. Twice. From all reports, the experience has touched him deeply, so much so that, at one point, he literally gave away the shirt on his back.

“We take so many things for granted,” he says, “like food and water.” And Then he talks about the horror of watching desperately thirsty people drink from dirty puddles on the street. “The same place where the tires go through,” he says.

But then, there was the incident last April in Omaha, when he and several friends went to an auto shop, apparently were displeased with the paint job on Crawford’s car and caused such a ruckus -- including taking the car down off the hydraulic lift themselves and damaging the lift -- that Crawford was arrested. He turned himself in to police and the case now appears headed to a civil court.

- Even before Pacquiao said he was coming back, the July 23<sup>rd</sup> fight was a real one, not a stepping stone to another stepping stone. It will be Crawford’s first main event pay-per-view show. It will be held in what has become a cradle for big-deal fights, the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. It will unify the 140-pound division. Crawford is the WBO champion and Postol the WBC king. The \$49.95 price tag that promoter Top Rank has put on the fight confirms that it thinks this is a big deal, and Top Rank has been gauging big deals for more than 50 years.

Crawford’s opponent, Postol, became a big deal himself when he beat the feared and favored Lucas Matthyse last fall. Not a lot of people in boxing saw that coming. Postol went from “who is he?” to “OMG, you don’t want to fight him.”

Nor is it likely that Postol, of Kiev, Ukraine, also 28-0 with 12 knockouts, is a one-shot wonder. His trainer is Freddie Roach, one of the best-ever in the sport. Roach says Postol followed the game plan against Matthyse to perfection and that there will be a game plan against Crawford.

In answer to a question about specifics to that plan, Roach says, "He [Postol] has a height advantage, a reach advantage, and a jab to set everything up."

Roach was so impressed that one of his fighters listened so intently to him that he called Postol's victory over Matthyse "one of the greatest wins of my career."

Were Postol to win and Top Rank decide that he is worthy of the shot against Pacquiao, it would mean one Roach-trained fighter against another. Who Roach would train is a no-brainer. "I've been with Manny for 15 years," he says. "We are like father and son."

Postol says he understands that and has another trainer in Ukraine, if needed.

Crawford can dance and he can slug. He often switches from conventional right-handed stance to lefty. He did so against a tough guy named Yuriorkis Gamboa two years ago, in a fight in Omaha. It was one of a series of recent building block tests, as Top Rank watched with great interest. He lost the first few rounds, just figuring out the awkward Gamboa, who alternately charged and flailed, then just charged and held on. Eventually, Crawford knocked Gamboa down four times, the fight being stopped the fourth time.

It was an impressive performance. Crawford never showed a moment of panic or concern. He was both workmanlike and flashy, making him and his future prospects intriguing.

One veteran ringside observer in that one, broadcaster Larry Merchant -- a man not given to easy hyperbole -- came, saw and was conquered.

"Terence Crawford has become an American star," Merchant said.

Merchant is seldom wrong, but if the boxing world needs more, July 23 offers a chance for the perfect exhibit A. Perhaps followed by Crawford-Pacquiao.

They could call that one "Dancing with the Stars."

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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](mailto:BillPatDwyre@gmail.com) or via Twitter at @BillDwyre.*

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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 **Next 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](http://mgmgrand.com) or **AXS.com** (<http://bit.ly/24ORYhs>)

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