He is without a doubt one of the greatest heavyweight champions in boxing history, and he has met and defeated the best fighters of his era, which is rare in boxing today. The only great fighter who he doesn't hold a win over is current champ Lennox Lewis, and it must be noted that the Holyfield who faced Lewis was not the same fighter who beat Douglas, Foreman, and split with Riddick Bowe in their first two fights. The Holyfield who fought Lewis was only capable of fighting in spurts. Not being able to fight a full round like he did in his peak hindered him from being able to outscore Lewis in order to gain a decision, although he came pretty close in their rematch.

What I respect about Holyfield so much is that he avoided no fighter and constantly sought the toughest fights. He wasn't intimidated by any heavyweight, and couldn't have cared less who he had to go through to reach his goal. Holyfield without a doubt is the biggest overachiever in heavyweight history. As a fighter he could do it all. He also had an undeniable will to win and he was capable of adjusting to any style. What most fail to mention about Holyfield is that he was the smaller fighter on the scale in all but three or four of his heavyweight bouts, though inside he was the bigger man.

However, there is absolutely nothing left for Evander to attain in boxing, he's done it all. My question is, "What will it take for him to walk away, how does his career come to a close?" I'm afraid one of his most admirable characteristics in the ring is the same trait that is going to hurt him in the end; it usually does to the true greats. Yes, his refusal to accept defeat in the ring during combat is the same voice he gives his ear to in not accepting that it's over. I have no doubt that he believes he can become undisputed heavyweight champion again. The character trait that enabled him to become heavyweight champ when most felt he wasn't big enough, or beat Riddick Bowe in their rematch when most believed he couldn't, or even beat Mike Tyson twice after needing clearance from the Mayo Clinic to be allowed to face Tyson, will probably get him in the end. His ability to overcome is what made him great and keeps him fighting today, he hasn't a single doubt that he can overcome again and reach his goal. That makes him a dangerous man, not only to his opponent but to himself.

This week Holyfield signed to fight IBF Cruiserweight champ James Toney. The Holyfield-Toney fight only comes as a result of broken negotiations in trying to make Holyfield-Jones. It's been reported that the deal breaker was that Evander refused to let Don King have options on his next three fights, if he were to beat Jones.

Where does he go if he beats Toney? Can a win over the Cruiserweight champ put him in position to become a mandatory challenger for one of the three major heavyweight titles? Looking at the three current title holders, I feel at this stage of the game, Holyfield is not capable of defeating any of them, (though if he were at his best, I feel certain he would've defeated all three). Lennox Lewis holds the WBC title, he is 0-1-1 against him but, in reality he's 0-2. As bad as Lewis looked vs. Klitschko, he'd be in great shape for Holyfield if they were to fight again, and would be a solid favorite to win. Chris Byrd holds the IBF title, he beat Holyfield to capture

it. I was ringside at this fight, from what I saw the "Real Deal" is not capable of putting enough pressure on Byrd, or sustaining the offensive effort it would take to win in a rematch. Roy Jones holds the WBA title, he beat Holyfield nemesis John Ruiz to win it. Again, at this stage of his career, I just don't think he's capable of putting forth the performance it would take to get by Jones to capture the title. Holyfield has fought Lewis twice and doesn't own a win over him. In his last fight he was out boxed by Chris Byrd. A potential fight with Roy Jones just fell through. I just don't see where Holyfield fits in the heavyweight title picture.

What will it take to convince him that living off the fat of the land and resting on his laurels and accomplishments is something that should be in his short term plans. I hate to suggest that any great fighter should call it a career but, Evander Holyfield has worked more than hard enough to sit back and reap all the due praise he will be showered with if he announced his retirement.

I know what he has said and what's going through his mind, nobody can beat him convincingly enough to persuade him to hang'em up. And as much as fighters will lie to themselves, especially in the twilight of their careers, this is no lie. A major problem is that with the current status of the heavyweight division, there isn't a fighter out there capable of going through Holyfield, even the watered down version that exist today. Another part of the equation is that as much as he has slipped, on a given night he's still capable of upsetting any of the three current champs, or top contenders. Unfortunately, he will most likely continue fighting until a totally shot Holyfield gets shellacked so bad that he is denied a license by the major commissions, New York, New Jersey, and Las Vegas.

Which way will Holyfield go out? Does he have to endure the type of beating that an empty package named Muhammad Ali had to from Larry Holmes? Since I believe he is every bit as stubborn as Ali, that may have been a poor example since Ali fought Trevor Berbick 14 months after Holmes. How about getting knocked into the press section around the ring like an old washed up Joe Louis did when he fought an up and coming Rocky Marciano? I just don't see it ending any other way for Holyfield.

Evander Holyfield is trapped by his own heart and toughness, these two remarkable gifts enabled him to scale great heights in boxing. Sadly enough we will see him take a horrendous beating before he finally packs it in, I just hope that by the time this happens, there is enough of him remaining to sit back later in life and relish all that he's done for boxing. At his best he sure gave boxing fans some terrific nights watching him do his thing. He proved to all that saw him fight, he could never be counted out regardless of who the opponent was.

Writers Note

In my opinion, I believe Evander Holyfield is without a doubt one of the top ten greatest heavyweight champions of all time. This is based on career accomplishments, and head-to-head vs other past heavyweight greats. He could've fought in any era and on a given night been capable of winning the title from any champ. Since the end of the Ali era (1978), I believe Larry Holmes and Holyfield are the two best heavyweight champions. I rank Holmes slightly over Holyfield, mostly because at their best I believe Holmes would have decisioned Holyfield but, I do not think it would've been a sure thing, it never was when Evander Holyfield

was the opponent. I wholeheartedly believe that the "Real Deal" is one of the most least appreciated heavyweight champions in boxing history, for many reasons!