

Mike Tyson And Father Time

Written by Frank Lotierzo
Friday, 12 March 2004 18:00

I just caught an interview with former Heavyweight Champion Mike Tyson on Cable TV. I can't believe how old and tired he looked. For the first time since following his career, I can say he really got to me inside. **He looked old, fat, wrinkled and weak.** Man, it really hit me hard. I have followed and watched Tyson fight since his amateur days back in 1980-81, and never viewed him like I did this time. Tyson even came right out and said that he's not fighting anybody, and that he couldn't get in shape.

I couldn't believe how tranquil and pensive he was. For the first time, I saw a beaten man when I looked into his eyes. Not beaten as a fighter, but as a man who has really been through it. A man who has seen the best and worst that life has to offer. No doubt that Mike Tyson is well versed on being at the highest high and the lowest low. In one of the clips, Tyson was at Gleason's gym doing his 100 hours of community service teaching kids to box. He actually looked at peace and the young kids looked ecstatic! What a thrill that must have been for them, having Mike Tyson hold the pads and encouraging them.

Although I have been a staunch critic of Tyson the fighter, and never believed for a single second that he was close to being the greatest heavyweight champ ever. I've always had a soft spot for him in my heart. I'm willing to look at maybe I underrate him, just as many overrate him? I've always known that there is a really good guy inside of him, one who he doesn't let many of us ever see. Tyson is a fighter who I've been lucky enough to spend some time around, mainly due to the brief acquaintance I had with Jim Jacobs. Let me tell you, when Tyson is in the mood, he is one of the best to discuss boxing with. Especially breaking down fighters style's and hypothetical match ups. I guess after being used and abused so much throughout his life, he has to keep his guard up. I guess this is why he is the ultimate contradiction. Being charming and warm one moment and then reverting to being mean and nasty the next.

I have often thought about how cool it must have been to be one of the people he really liked and trusted back in the day. Can you imagine a night on the town in New York with Mike Tyson. First of all, you wouldn't need any money. Women would be all over the place. And how many of your buddies could go up to New York Giants linebacker Lawrence Taylor in a club, and tell him that if he doesn't leave, he's going to get his ass kicked. And then he actually leaves. That scenario really did play out one night in the late 80's when Tyson was on top of the world.

Can't believe that Tyson will be 38 this June 30th. Wow, 38 years old. That's how old Larry Holmes was when he fought Tyson in January of 1988. And ya know what, Holmes looked better then, then Tyson does now. Who would've believed that back then?

Mike Tyson turned pro in 1985 and won the Heavyweight title in November of 1986 to become the youngest Heavyweight champ in boxing history. It's now 2004, 19 years later and I really believe that Mike Tyson may never be a major factor again in the Heavyweight division as a fighter. Oh, his name still has some mileage and will always create some excitement, but I can't see him being the champ again. Something as recently as a year ago, I thought was at least a

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remote possibility.

What's really a crazy thought is that even in this transitional time in the heavyweight division, Tyson probably can't compete at the top. He's very heavy and it would take him forever and a day to get in great shape again and then stay active enough to be ready for one of the world's premier heavyweights. And lets be honest, there isn't one heavyweight out there right now who can even spell the word great.

Yes, I think Tyson was overrated as a fighter and champion by a lot of the media and fans. However, I will not deny that he was one of the most talented Heavyweight Champs of all time. And if fights were fought on paper instead of in the ring, he'd be among the true greats nipping at the heels of Louis and Ali. That being said, I can't imagine what Tyson of 1986-88 would do to today's top heavies.

I hope Tyson straightens himself out and lives a long happy life in peace. Maybe instead of the press shoving a microphone in front of George Foreman and Mike Tyson every time they are in public, and asking them if they are going to fight each other. Maybe they could ask Foreman if he has any interest in managing Tyson and helping him out. Foreman is now 55 and Tyson will be 38 in three months. The boxing world can live if it doesn't see them fight. If Foreman won, what would it really do for him other than making him even richer. If Tyson won, it would prove nothing, and if he lost he'd be humiliated. No thanks! How about somebody getting Foreman and Tyson together so Foreman can assist him and guide him if he wants to fight again or whatever else he may choose to do. I have no doubt that the cunning Foreman could help straighten Tyson out mentally and financially. And us, we can argue for the next 100 years over who would've won, Foreman of 1973-74, or Tyson of 1987-88?