

Bid Adieu to Phillip Ndou

Written by Joey Knish

Thursday, 21 October 2004 18:00

This week Phillip "The Time Bomb" Ndou officially announced that he would be walking away from the sport of boxing, and despite a potentially bright future ahead, he left at the right time. Too often boxers allow the fighter inside to drive them back to the ring when sense tells them otherwise. It's time to recognize a man for doing the right thing and choosing the right time to do it.

It was a routine brain scan—as Ndou prepped for his scheduled IBO Lightweight title next month in Wales—that revealed an abnormality in the brain. Abnormalities in the brain are not to be taken lightly, and Ndou has responded by making the right, albeit difficult, career decision. It's a decision that allows him to have another career.

Ndou hangs up the gloves with a 31-3-0 record that included a spectacular 30 knockouts, with rock jawed Cassius Baloyi being the only fighter to hear the final bell in a loss to Ndou. None others were so fortunate. He had gone five years since his first professional loss until things started rain on his championship dreams. In his final two fights he was stopped by Floyd Mayweather in November 2003 and last went 12 rounds with undefeated hot prospect, and fellow South Afrikaner, Isaac Hlatshwayo in losing a hotly contested split decision in May of this year.

After the loss to Mayweather he was congratulated for a great effort, but in his ultimate fight in Carnival City, South Africa, Ndou collapsed in the dressing room and was taken to the hospital for observation. Still, it wasn't until he was preparing himself for a title bout in Wales against Jason Cook that reality took hold. Experts revealed to Ndou that continuing to box could cause severe damage. The gloves were off.

A gentleman always, Ndou was respectful and grateful for the support he received from promoters, manager/trainer Nick Durandt and his fans. While we may have had the chance to see great things from "The Time Bomb" in the ring, it could have come at a price that nobody would want to have seen paid. The stories of former fighters who stayed in too long are lengthy and often sad. They far outnumber the tales of fighters who have come back and actually realized their ambitious goals. Boxing is not a forgiving sport and it extracts a toll that is often paid, in one form or another, for life.

When a boxer leaves because his body tells him that his time has come it is worth recognizing and paying tribute to his accomplishments. Phillip Ndou held fringe titles such as the WBU Super Feather belt, WBC and WBA International championships, as well as the South African Featherweight trinket. Wins over Cassius Baloyi, Claudio Victor Martinet and Yoni Vargas are the most notable names on his resume, but even in losses to Mayweather and Hlatshwayo he showed the heart of champion.

At just 27 years of age, Ndou had a lot of fight left in him and just last year had given Floyd Mayweather all he could handle. Mayweather, arguably boxing's most complete fighter, told

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Ndou after the bout that he would surely be a world champion someday. The bout with Jason Cook for the IBO belt was to be the start of greater things to come for the South African native.

Now that fresh start will have to take place outside of the ring, and he knows it.