

## Why We Missed The Battle Of Youngstown

Written by Jim Amato

Saturday, 23 October 2004 18:00

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**Since this article was first published in 1997, Harry and Ray have put any animosity behind them.**

Let us make believe that it is 1984 again and the management of Ray Mancini decided NOT to defend his W.B.A. lightweight title against Livingstone Bramble. Instead they opt to unify at least part of the championship against cross town rival Harry Arroyo, the I.B.F. title holder. The bout would be held in their home town of Youngstown, Ohio and be televised live nationally. The whole city of Youngstown and its surrounding areas are buzzing with excitement and anticipation. The TV executives predict a bonanza rating since both boxers are proven crowd pleasers. In the days preceding the FIGHT, there is electricity in the air. The city is divided in its loyalty. Mancini seems to be the fans favorite, but Arroyo has a faithful contingent too. The fight has been a sell out for weeks and the local betting has been heavy. This is a bookmaker's dream and Mancini's going off as an 8 to 5 favorite with decent action on the Arroyo short end.

Mancini, short, muscular and aggressive with bread and butter left hook -VS- Arroyo, tall and lean with a stiff jab and a stiffer right cross. What a match up! Alas this possible scenario never took place. Why? Who is at fault, if anyone? Did one boxer avoid the other as has been hinted? Did Ray or his management plan on a payday against Arroyo after a victory over Bramble or is it possible Harry was never in their plans?

To understand this further, let's explore the careers of each boxer. Even as an amateur Ray caught on like wildfire. In his hometown, the son of a former contender, Mancini's story line is very attractive and after turning pro the media blitz was on. Handsome and personable, Mancini had it all. In the ring he was an action fighter. There was never a dull moment when Ray was on the tube. His manager, Dave Wolf, moved him wisely and cautiously. In Ray's only real test preceding a title shot he won a convincing decision over future champion Jose Luis Rameriz. His title fight with Alexis Arguello may have been his finest moment even in a losing effort. Arguello is an all time great and Mancini gave him one of his toughest fights before fading in the fourteenth round.

Ray's title winning performance against mediocre Art Frias and defense against over matched Duk Koo Kim, Orlando Romero and Bobby Chacon did little to enhance his fistic reputation. The loss to Bramble was a real surprise. Had they underestimated Bramble's ability? The fact remains that Mancini never won another professional fight.

Arroyo on the other hand also came up through the amateur ranks, but with much less fanfare than Ray. As a professional, Harry worked his way up the ladder earning a rating with a victory over tough Robin Blake. He secured on I.B.F. title bout with "Choo Choo" Brown and won the crown in a true action fight. Come from behind defense against "White Lightning" Brown and Terrance Alli made Arroyo a TV fan favorite. Unable to entice Ray into the ring with him, Harry fought and lost his crown to Kronkster Jimmy Paul. As in the case of Mancini, Arroyo's career declined rapidly after his title loss. A shocking KO defeat to Sammy Fuentes and a one sided

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decision loss to then up coming Vinny Pazienza took Harry out of the picture. A one round loss to future junior welter weight champion Loreto Garza relegated Arroyo to rank of an also ran. So by fate the paths of Ray "Boom Boom" Mancini and Harry Arroyo never crossed in a professional prize ring.

Arroyo still lives and works in the Youngstown area while Ray now resides on the West coast. Mancini is still idolized in his home and this may have caused some bitterness for Harry. Ray's claim of not wanting to box Harry because of their "friendship" may bear some looking into. According to sources close to Arroyo, the two never even had a cup of coffee together. So much for a friendship that deprived Youngstown of a true super bout. The courage of both men goes unchallenged. The feeling here is that the Bramble loss completely disrupted any of Mancini's future plans. He wanted Bramble again, got him and almost beat him in their rematch.

Arroyo won the I.B.F. crown only two months before Ray's first loss to Bramble. Who knows if the Mancini camp planned to meet with Harry of Ray would have gotten by Bramble. Mancini remained inactive for several years after he lost his title. By the time Ray was ready to box again Harry's star had dimmed considerably and Mancini secured lucrative bouts with Hector Camacho and later Greg Haugen before retiring.

Ray Mancini and Harry Arroyo, both men, champions and winners. The only loser in this story was the hard luck city of Youngstown, Ohio.