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This past weekend there were two heavyweight championship fights at Madison Square Garden in New York City. The two fights on paper shared many of the same parallels. However, in my opinion there was one that was undeniable and stood out above the rest. That was the fact that both defending champions were overachievers, and both challengers were underachievers.

Prior to the first bell, there was one thing that was an absolute certainty in both fights. That was John Ruiz and Chris Byrd weren't going to give their titles away to Andrew Golota and Jameel McCline. If the challengers were going to leave the ring as champions, they'd have to fight and endure some mental and physical fatigue and pressure to accomplish it. And that's something neither challenger had shown they could overcome in previous big fights.

If Jameel McCline had a character transplant with Evander Holyfield Wednesday morning and fought a rematch with Chris Byrd Saturday night, who wins? If you even entertained the thought that Byrd wins again for a tenth of a second, you've wasted a lot of your time watching boxing and need to go back to TV Land reruns.

This past Saturday night McCline, less Holyfield's determination and heart, had Byrd down and hurt, and for the first five rounds was in command. Then a funny thing happened. The fear of losing the title scared the hell out of Byrd. The thought of waking up the next morning without the title was ten times scarier to him than McCline's power and 270 pounds. For Chris Byrd, that's when the fight actually started.

From the very second the fear of losing and not having the title struck Byrd, McCline was forced to raise his game. What worked and was winning for him early no longer was enough. The fact that McCline was bigger, stronger, hit harder, and had the reach meant nothing. As Byrd showed against Ibeabuchi in a losing effort, you have to practically kill him to convince him he can't win.

However, that's not the case with McCline. You don't have to kill him to convince him he can't win. His opponent just has to show that he's willing to go through and do whatever it takes to win and that he won't be denied. When that message is picked up by McCline, it makes him a little uncomfortable and he has not been able to fight through it. That's why he's not a special fighter. Despite all the physical advantages he holds over Byrd, winning just isn't as urgent to him as it is to Byrd. But you could bet everything you own if he had a character transplant with Holyfield, Byrd couldn't beat him once in ten tries.

Almost the same scenario unfolded in the WBA title fight between defending champ John Ruiz and Andrew Golota. In that fight it was also a given that Ruiz wasn't going to lose the fight by handing it willingly over to Golota. No, for Golota to leave the ring with Ruiz's title, he was going to have to fight him for it.

And like the Byrd-McCline bout, there were some absolutes in this fight as well. Such as Golota

being clearly the more skilled fighter and better boxer. Not to mention being a sharper and more accurate puncher with better boxing fundamentals. The only thing Ruiz had over Golota was desire and toughness, and in the end that was the difference. For Golota to walk out of the ring with Ruiz's title, he'd just about have to half kill him. In order for Golota to do that, he'd have to be willing to sacrifice and put himself in the same peril. Something he's never been willing to do in order to win a big fight.

Golota had Ruiz down twice in the second round and was controlling the fight in the early going. And just like Byrd, when Ruiz saw his title and the fight slipping away, it scared him. The fact that Golota could hit him more accurate and harder than he could hit Golota never crossed his mind. All Ruiz knew was that he had to get going and make the fight as rough and nasty as possible and try to convince Golota he wasn't going to win.

Ruiz never stopped trying and forcing the fight, regardless of how bad he looked or what Golota did. Once Golota sensed how determined Ruiz was, his will faded and instead of letting his hands go and nailing a wide open Ruiz as he was coming in, he tightened up and let Ruiz dictate. In a fight that Golota had control of early, once again he came undone and didn't finish. By Golota fighting tentative and not going for it, he left the door open for Ruiz. And that cost him the fight.

Forget about the scoring for a second. The fight was close and many rounds could've gone to either fighter. Why was that? Because Ruiz never stopped trying to win and refused to be denied. As opposed to Golota, who was happy being competitive and keeping it close. Had Golota dug down and fought hard for maybe one or two more rounds, he would be champ today.

When John Ruiz loses, it's to better and more talented fighters. Andrew Golota can do everything in a ring better than John Ruiz can—except win. Golota has never stepped up even for a round in a big fight to give himself a chance to pull it out. John Ruiz is an overachiever who has stepped up and given his all every time out. And that is exactly why he's 5-2-1 in heavyweight title fights and is a two time champ, and Golota is 0-3 in heavyweight title bouts and never held a piece of the title. Ask yourself this question, if Ruiz and Golota had a character transplant Wednesday morning and fought a rematch this Saturday night, who wins?

This past Saturday night the WBA and IBF heavyweight titles were up for grabs. Champions Chris Byrd and John Ruiz have shown that they can get it done and win at the highest level in the heavyweight division, despite giving up size and skill in just about every fight.

I know, Byrd is too small and can't punch, and Ruiz has no skill and is hard to watch. They just win.