

The Dream is over for Evander Holyfield

Written by Rick Folstad

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Say goodbye, Evander.

Throw a party, prepare a speech, give a toast, say your fond farewells and move onto something better, safer and easier.

Just don't fight again.

Breed dogs, build a boat, sail around the world, collect guns, learn to weld, tie flies or plant your own garden.

Just stay away from the gym.

Grow flowers, watch your kids play soccer, rebuild an engine, take up carpentry or learn to speak Spanish. Coach or manage.

Just don't put the gloves on again. Ever. We can't stand to watch someone wipe their feet on a Rembrandt.

Holyfield's lopsided loss to Larry Donald on Saturday should have set the retirement sirens screaming. How far does he have to fall before he realizes it's over, that the dream is long dead, that his legacy is taking a worse beating than his pride?

Over his last nine fights, he's 2 5 2. In his last three fights, he was stopped by James Toney, humbled by Donald and out-boxed by Chris Byrd. Yet somehow, in spite of the losses, he still thinks he can be heavyweight champion of the world again.

Not with those numbers. Not at 42 and counting.

That's why the New York State Athletic Commission suspended Holyfield earlier this week, a ban that prevents him from fighting anywhere in the country.

"Evander Holyfield has absorbed enough punishment throughout his great career," NYSAC Chairman Ron Stevens was quoted as saying. "It's time to stop the bleeding."

Of course, Holyfield still isn't ready to turn out the lights and go home.

"Why do they want to usher me out?" he reportedly asked the Atlanta Journal Constitution. "What have I done to this game that they don't want me in it anymore? Do you really care about a person so much that you want to protect him from himself?"

The argument against the ban is that Holyfield hasn't taken that many beatings in his career and he still has a right to make a living in the ring. He hasn't lost as many fights as hundreds of club

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fighters out there who are still allowed to fight; and if he can still pass his physical, why can't he fight?

But if you look a little deeper, you realize Holyfield's speed, legs and reflexes are gone. All he has left to fight with is heart, toughness and a good chin. Not only is that not enough, it's dangerous.

Also, he's always been small for a heavyweight, and that makes the punches he absorbs that much more damaging. And he's taking more and more punches every fight.

As for passing a physical, your grandmother could probably pass one, but do you want her fighting a 12 rounder?

Finally, the club fighters out there who are losing half their fights are losing mostly to other club fighters. They're not going in against world-class talent. They're fighting at their own level against guys like Dusty Trunks and Willie Getup. They're not getting hammered by world beaters like Kostya Tszyu.

But Holyfield doesn't fight bums. He fights the best fighters in the heavyweight division, and if he goes into the ring missing the special tools that at one time made him one of the best in the world, that's not safe and it's not right.

How does that go? You don't take a knife into a gunfight.

It's time for Holyfield to put away the knife.