

Mike Tyson: The Good And Bad On June 28th

Written by Frank Lotierzo
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When it comes to Mike Tyson and dates, two stand out. One of those dates represents a good and a bad day for Tyson. The other date represents what are probably the two worst days of his life. It was on February 10th, 1990 (it was still the 10th when the fight was broadcast live in the States) when Tyson was knocked out by Buster Douglas in Tokyo, losing his aura of invincibility forever. Two years later, on February 10th, 1992, Tyson was convicted of raping Desiree Washington in an Indiana Hotel room.

However, the date I want to discuss is June 28th. During his 19 year pro career, Mike Tyson has fought three rematches. It just so happens that two of them fell on the same date – June 28th. In one of those fights, he fought well and won a tough fight against a formidable and dangerous opponent. In the other rematch, exactly six years later, he fought a great opponent and the fight ended in what is possibly the most bizarre ending of any title fight ever.

June 28th, 1991 - Tyson-Ruddock II

On March 18th 1991, Tyson fought the hard-hitting, once beaten Razor Ruddock. Tyson exposed Ruddock as basically a one-armed bandit. Ruddock's bread and butter punch was his left hand "smash," a hybrid left hook-uppercut. Tyson was just too smart and seasoned to be suckered by a fighter with only one weapon. Other than a brief Ruddock flurry at the end of the sixth round, it was Tyson's fight. In the seventh round Tyson stunned Ruddock and knocked him back against the ropes. He immediately jumped on him with a barrage of punches and Richard Steele stopped the fight with Ruddock vehemently protesting. Some believe it was a quick stoppage, but Tyson was controlling the whole fight, except for that brief Ruddock flurry in the sixth round. However, the perception that referee Richard Steele was Don King's referee, and Ruddock's protests, led to the rematch.

On June 28th 1991, Tyson and Ruddock met for the second time. This fight went the 12 round distance, with Tyson winning a unanimous decision. There were two knockdowns in the fight, both scored by Tyson. He put Ruddock down once in the second and fourth rounds and broke Ruddock's jaw in the process. Although Tyson won a comfortable decision, it was certainly not an easy fight for him. Ruddock fought very hard and never succumbed to Tyson's overall better skill and speed. In fact, Ruddock caught Tyson with some big "smashes" in the fight and definitely got the better of him in spurts. Although he never dropped Tyson, he did shake him pretty good on more than one occasion.

Against Ruddock, Tyson showed that he suffered no lack of confidence or harbored any self doubt against a top opponent after the Douglas defeat. Tyson appeared to be back. Ruddock was a stern test and even though it wasn't totally one sided, Tyson proved he was the better fighter and was ready to fight Undisputed Heavyweight Champ Evander Holyfield.

Shortly after he beat Ruddock in the rematch, Tyson signed to fight Evander Holyfield on November 8th of 1991. As luck would have it, Tyson hurt his rib training for the fight. In the

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meantime, he was charged with sexual assault. The rib injury pushed the fight back too close to the upcoming trial, so it was cancelled. Little did we know at the time that we'd end up seeing Holyfield and Tyson fight five years later on November 9th 1996.

June 28th, 1997 - Tyson-Holyfield II

Finally, after a five year delay, Mike Tyson and Evander Holyfield met with Tyson's WBA & WBC titles on the line. The first Tyson-Holyfield fight was outstanding and voted fight of the year by Ring Magazine. During the fight Holyfield won most of the exchanges and knocked Tyson down in the sixth round, although it was more a case of Tyson being caught while he was off balance. At the end of the tenth round, Holyfield had Tyson hurt and in real trouble. When the tenth ended, the fight basically ended and there was no way Tyson could recover during the minute in between the tenth and eleventh rounds. In the eleventh, Holyfield drilled Tyson with a right hand that buckled him and left him taking a pounding as referee Mitch Halpren moved in and stopped the fight. In the process of winning the Heavyweight title for a third time, Holyfield defeated the fighter of his era he would most often be measured against.

The Tyson-Holyfield rematch was originally scheduled for March of 1997. However, Tyson was cut in training and the fight was postponed. On June 28th, 1997, Tyson and Holyfield met for a second time. Since Tyson never fought Buster Douglas a second time, this would be the biggest fight of his career to date. This would be the only time Mike would face a fighter who beat him in a rematch. Tyson also wouldn't be able to fall back on the excuse he used after the first fight -- that he underestimated Holyfield. Holyfield took him apart the first time. Tyson knew what kind of fighter he would be facing in Holyfield this time.

In their first fight, Tyson found out that he can't beat Holyfield in a long knock down, drag out type of fight. He knew he had to put a hurtin' on Holyfield early to give himself the best chance to win. Holyfield, who didn't run away in the first fight, met Tyson head on again. The first two rounds of this fight were spirited, but clearly belonged to Holyfield. Tyson throughout his entire career has been the most dangerous in the first couple rounds, yet for the second fight in a row Holyfield not only fought back, but was bettering Tyson at the time in a fight when Tyson is at his best.

After two rounds, Holyfield was winning. No doubt Tyson knew that if Holyfield could stand up to his best in rounds one and two, he surely can handle anything Tyson had to offer the deeper the fight went. In the third round Tyson came out as if he knew that if he was going to win the fight, he had to do it soon. In that third round Tyson unloaded his best on Holyfield and again Holyfield didn't go anywhere.

Midway through the third round Tyson and Holyfield were in a clinch, when Tyson bit Holyfield on his ear. Holyfield screamed and complained to referee Mills Lane. After Lane saw the blood dripping from Holyfield's ear, he warned Tyson saying that if you do it again, you're disqualified. After one brief exchange, the fighters were in a clinch again and Tyson bit Holyfield's other ear, when Lane saw Holyfield's other ear bleeding he interrupted the fight. Shortly after halting the fight, he disqualified Tyson, which caused hysteria in the ring and among the crowd.

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After the fight Tyson claimed he bit Holyfield because Holyfield kept head-butting him. I don't buy it one bit. I know Holyfield is not the altar boy he tries to pass himself off as, but the head-butting was just an excuse for Tyson to save face and get out of the fight. Funny how not once during or after the first fight between them was it even an issue.

I believe this seed was planted in Tyson's head when George Foreman appeared on ESPN's Up Close a week before Tyson-Holyfield II and said Holyfield is a dirty fighter who uses his head illegally. This gave Tyson the perfect out. He could claim he lost it because Holyfield was fighting dirty. Tyson knew his career could never recover from a second consecutive stoppage loss to his main rival, Evander Holyfield. This action was just a ploy by Tyson to cover the fact that he knew he was on his way to being stopped again by Holyfield, and that thought petrified him. It's remarkable how two of the dirtiest Heavyweight Champions in history, Foreman and Tyson, both cry about other fighters bending the rules.

June 28th, 2004 - Tyson Today

As of today, Mike Tyson is scheduled to fight British Heavyweight, Danny Williams at the end of July. Since losing the rematch to Holyfield in June of 1997, Tyson has fought 8 times, going 5-1 with 2 No-Contests. His defeat was to Heavyweight Champ Lennox Lewis in June of 2002, when he was knocked out in the eighth round.

Really, Mike Tyson has been a non factor in the Heavyweight division since June 28th 1997, seven years ago today. Yet he is still the biggest story and attraction in the sport.