

## Mike Tyson: A Matter Of Head And Body

Written by Frank Lotierzo  
Monday, 12 July 2004 21:00

---

Recently I wrote that I believe former Heavyweight Champ Mike Tyson will give it his all in what is certainly his last chance to right his career. The Tyson return begins on July 30th when he fights British Heavyweight Danny Williams. Obviously, we all know that Williams is not a world-beater. However, I will give Tyson a pass on this fight. He hasn't really fought in over two years and shouldn't be expected to take on one of the world's Heavyweight elite, at least not in his first fight. At age 38, Tyson must be methodical in this comeback.

This is a crucial time for Tyson -- he certainly can't afford any slip up. An unforeseen loss at this time would be catastrophic for him. Although I'm in the minority, I've always felt that even when he was in his prime, Tyson could lose on any given night to almost anybody. Buster Douglas proved this 14 years ago. Some say Tyson wasn't right, or Douglas was great that night and could've beaten some other past former greats as he did Tyson. That is a theory that I definitely don't endorse. Had Douglas been fighting Holyfield, Lewis, or Bowe instead of Tyson in Tokyo that night, he would've been beaten soundly. Tyson's mental frailty has always been his weakness. If his confidence is shaken during the fight, especially early, he is vulnerable to being defeated by any decent Heavyweight.

Mike Tyson is an attacking, swarming, pressure fighter. Like Rocky Marciano and Joe Frazier before him, he is short for a Heavyweight. Although he is listed at 5'11", he is really 5'10". I've stood next to him many times, and he is 5'10" tops. In fact, if you've seen Tyson standing next to Joe Frazier, who is a legitimate 5'11", Frazier looks more like former New York Knicks great Walt Frazier next to him. Short fighters with short reaches have to get inside to be effective. They must be busy pushing the fight to get inside. But there is a price to pay for coming in against a taller fighter with a longer reach. That price is being vulnerable to getting tagged on the way in.

The swarmer must use constant head and upper body movement, while getting under his opponent and working his body. To do this for any sustained period, the swarmer must be in supreme shape. Regardless of who he is, Marciano, Frazier, or Tyson, the swarmer must work twice as hard as his usually taller and longer opponent to make his lack of height and reach work for him. It can't be emphasized enough how much Tyson will have to be in top shape during this tour of the Heavyweight division. If he tires, he becomes stationary and upright, putting himself in range for his opponents incoming punches. Even though he has a sturdy chin, when Tyson starts to get hit with regularity, his confidence and focus start to wane.

Tyson must also focus on his weight. When he first won the title he weighed between 216-219 lbs. However, that was when he was 20 years old. In his last fight versus Clifford Etienne back in February of 2003, he was around 225 lbs. No doubt the 216-219 lb. range is probably unrealistic, but no way should he be over 225 lbs. I'd say 222-224 lbs. is probably what he should shoot for. With Tyson's weight down, he'll maintain his hand speed.

Tyson will also have to try and be busy letting his hands go, something else that requires a

## Mike Tyson: A Matter Of Head And Body

Written by Frank Lotierzo  
Monday, 12 July 2004 21:00

---

fighter to be in peak shape. Throughout his career Tyson's main asset has been his accuracy and speed. Most feel that Tyson is a one punch knockout artist, but he really isn't. Granted, he's a great two handed puncher, but there have been better one punch knockout artists throughout Heavyweight history.

The thing that made Tyson unique from other punchers was that his hands were extremely fast. It's more that his opponents didn't see his punches coming along with the fact that he was very accurate. For Tyson to have a chance in this pedestrian Heavyweight division, his mental state and conditioning will be paramount. That's certainly no secret, but they must be the focus of his preparation in training. Somebody in Tyson's brain-trust better instill in him that he must have his weight down, he can't just look for one punch and he can't fight lazy. He also must not panic if things don't go his way early. I have no doubt that some of Tyson's opponents are going to try and catch him with something big early in the fight, in hopes to possibly shake his confidence.

The way I see it, Tyson does have a shot to be a factor again in the division. Nothing is more important than him getting his mind and body in sync. If Tyson can get in good enough shape to bring the head movement back and fight for three minutes every round, he'll give himself the best chance to succeed.

Finally, someone better prepare Tyson mentally and emotionally. The upper-tier Heavyweights no longer fear Tyson. They now go into the ring believing they can beat him, which is a must when facing Tyson. That's why he better be ready to battle through adversity when he is confronted with it this time around. Believe me, Tyson's will and character will be more than tested in this final leg of his career. Nothing can prepare him better mentally than knowing when he enters the ring that he's in the best possible shape he could be in.