

The Return Of Mike Tyson Starts After Williams

Written by Frank Lotierzo
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On Friday night former Heavyweight Champ Mike Tyson fights for only the second time in the last 25 months. As with all fights involving Tyson, there is much talk and anticipation.

Tyson's opponent is British Heavyweight, Danny Williams (31-3). Williams' name cannot be found in anybody's top ten ranking. The fact that Williams is unranked means absolutely nothing regarding this fight. Boxing fans haven't seen much of Tyson in the ring lately and are hungry to see him again and find out if he has anything left as a world class fighter. The upcoming fight with Williams is viewed by many boxing observers as the beginning of what is most likely Tyson's final comeback attempt. At least that much can be taken seriously. That being said, I believe the real test for Tyson begins Saturday July 31st, the day after the fight. I'll explain why shortly.

The build up for this fight will really start to gain momentum as the week winds down. I'll bet ESPN and their fair weather boxing coverage will be all over the fight. ESPN the television network is all about headlines and ratings, and Mike Tyson provides both. I'm sure ESPN is aware that this might be Tyson's last run up to a possible title shot, so you can bet ESPN will be littered with Tyson coverage in order to cash in.

When the bell rings for round one Friday night, all viewing eyes will be focused squarely on Tyson. Those watching will scrutinize his every move, making mental notes on what he does and doesn't do during the fight. They'll be looking to see if he is exhibiting head and upper body movement, as a way to gauge his defense. No doubt his hand speed will be something to watch, along with his punch output. Those watching will be looking to see if he is throwing multiple punch combinations, or is he loading up looking to end the fight with one big shot -- in essence, fighting lazy. His stamina will also be something of concern. If Tyson has to fight more than a few rounds, will he start to fade and get sloppy?

In most Tyson fights, his mental stability is usually an issue if he is forced to fight into the later rounds. If he is hit hard or met with serious resistance by Williams, how will he react? How about if Williams realizes some success offensively, will Tyson get frustrated and resort to arm bending, hitting on the break and after the bell? Those are just some of the things many will be looking out for. One thing that shouldn't be an issue is Tyson's power. I'm sure it is still formidable. You can be sure if Tyson were to lose, it won't be because his power deserted him.

I'm here to tell you not to strain your eyes too hard getting caught up in scrutinizing any one of those things too closely. In this fight they won't tell us much, if anything, about Tyson the fighter. The important thing in this fight is for Tyson to go out and get the win in a convincing fashion. Look, it's not news to anyone that Williams is not in Tyson's league as a fighter, that's why he was chosen. Whatever Tyson does right in this fight, as long as it lasts, won't tell us anything. Against Williams his technique and execution, despite being rusty, shouldn't be an issue. Most likely it will be the rust and inactivity that will hinder him the most, opposed to what Williams does.

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On the other hand, if Tyson is sloppy and fights anxiously, Williams probably isn't good enough to make him pay. In other words, Tyson shouldn't be overly praised if he looks great and executes his attack perfectly. The same holds true for the reverse. If Tyson is wild and misses a lot of punches and gets hit more than he should as a result, he shouldn't be dismissed either. This is just a fight for him to get back in the ring and start to shake off the jitters and rust. The ideal scenario for Tyson would be for him to get a few rounds in and score an impressive knockout. Again, that's the ideal scenario if you're Tyson.

That being said, I believe the true test for Mike Tyson starts on Saturday July 31st, the day after the fight. I say that because Tyson has been in this situation many times before. He'll feel spectacular after the fight and will be getting praised immediately afterwards. History shows that when he has been in this predicament before, it's here where his plan and focus come undone. Most of the time he usually responds in one of the following ways.

He either fights a slew of journeymen, which do not help prepare him for the upper-tier fighters he must eventually face down the road. Another scenario is he'll take a big fight too soon for the payday, which results in him not looking good or losing. The pattern most common is one where he doesn't remain active, resulting in him always having to start over. That is definitely something that cannot unfold this time or his comeback will be short lived.

Yes, after Mike Tyson beats Danny Williams is when he'll truly be tested. For this final return of Tyson the fighter to go anywhere, he must do the following. He must get right back in the gym and have a fight scheduled, just as he did on the way up. He must keep his weight under control and not blow up in between fights. And he must fight better opposition as he moves along so he doesn't get stale and regress. It does him no good fighting five fighters the caliber of Williams and then challenging Vitali Klitschko.

No, he can't do it the old way this time, or the result will be the same. This is his final chance. He cannot cut corners and cheat himself any longer. Basically, Tyson has to pretend that it's 1985-86 and he has to eat, drink, and sleep boxing. Anything short of that won't do.

The real comeback for Tyson starts after the Williams fight. I know he can sacrifice and discipline himself for one fight. Now he must stay focused for at least a couple of years, something he hasn't been able to do since the late 1980's. It's how he responds on the days he feels like sleeping in instead of running. It's how he forces himself to train and spar on the days his body hurts, or he just doesn't feel like it. Lastly, he must change and be willing to fight the best fighters available once he gets the rust off. It's something Tyson hasn't always been willing to do.

Although the calendar says Tyson's long march back starts with the fight versus Danny Williams, it really doesn't. Tyson's march back to a possible title shot starts after Williams. What he does starting the day after the fight will go a long way in determining if he even has a chance to succeed.