

Mike Tyson Deserves a Break

Written by Rick Folstad
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C'mon Guv, give the guy a break. After all, this is New Jersey we're talking about, not Disneyland.

Mike Tyson isn't the first convicted felon seeking employment opportunities in the great state of New Jersey. There have been other shady characters and ex-cons looking for honest work in the Garden State. I think there's even been a few mob sightings in Paterson and Newark, though no one will swear by it. Don't any of you guys watch the Sopranos?

But that doesn't mean you want Mike Tyson fighting there. Or at least Gov. James E. McGreevey doesn't want him fighting there. That'd be foolhardy, reckless, a shirking of duties by the Office of the Governor. McGreevey has to protect the women and children of his state. Reputations are at stake, people could be insulted.

Of course, telling Tyson he wasn't going to be allowed to fight in any of the state's facilities after he already had his boxing license, was also a good way for McGreevey to make the 6 p.m. news.

Let's see a show of hands. How many of you guys (not counting those who live in New Jersey or follow the Nets) had ever heard of Gov. McGreevey prior to the Tyson flap? That's what I thought. I didn't know who he was either.

But we know who he is now. He's the dashing governor who is single-handedly trying to clean up his state, keep the riff-raff out, make a garden spot like the Jersey Shore a cleaner, safer, kinder place for all of us.

So how does he do it? How does the Governor boycott Mike Tyson? He blindsides state athletic commissioner Larry Hazzard - who on Monday granted Tyson his license - by informing everyone that Tyson might have a license to box in New Jersey, but he wasn't going to have a place to use it.

McGreevey was reported as saying Tyson was incapable of being a good sport. Not a good sport? Neither is Barry Bonds, but I bet they'd let him play ball in Elizabeth.

Apparently, the state of New Jersey - where Tyson has fought 12 times - doesn't need the added revenue that would be generated by a Tyson fight. They have enough money coming in from all the people who lose money at the casinos in Atlantic City.

"(Tyson) comes to me pleading with me to give him a chance to feed his family," Hazzard was quoted as saying by the Las Vegas Sun. "He said he's broke, he doesn't have any money, he doesn't even have any stable living quarters. A man like that, who's done so much for the sport of boxing in New Jersey. In many ways, the state of New Jersey owes him as far as boxing is concerned."

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I was in New Jersey once. I was in Trenton in the early spring and it was the closest I've ever come to being mugged. I was attending a fight and I was walking back to my hotel one night when four guys surrounded me and asked if I had a little extra spending money. I finally got them talking about the fights and they let me go. But the cherry blossoms were in bloom, so it wasn't all bad.

Yeah, I have fond memories of New Jersey. And now I know who the governor is.