

Riddick Bowe Has No Business In A Boxing Ring

Written by Matthew Aguilar

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Recalling the night Riddick Bowe dismantled Evander Holyfield, Nov. 13, 1992, is an extraordinary memory when you consider "Big Daddy's" rapid fall from grace.

But it happened all right. The proof is on hundreds of videotapes and DVDs, that magic night at the Thomas & Mack Center in Las Vegas.

Bowe, the undefeated challenger from Brooklyn, N.Y., with the easy smile, was playful to the point of confusion leading up to the fight. He treated Holyfield more like his old high school buddy than a guy he hoped to flatten. But once the fight started, it was obvious that the 6-foot-5, 235-pound challenger was hellbent on taking Holyfield's undisputed heavyweight championship.

He entered the ring to Phil Collins' "In The Air Tonight," an eery tune that announced the arrival of Bowe's moment of truth. There he was, decked out in a white robe with red trim - Larry Holmes colors - walking to the ring with a single purpose.

He wanted to become his era's Larry Holmes.

Early on, though - when Holyfield burst out of his corner intent on quieting those critics who were criticizing his three-fight championship reign - you wondered if Bowe had the resolve to hang with the champion. The "Real Deal" came out with guns blazing -disregarding the fact that his 6-2, 213-pound frame was undersized for a shootout. Holyfield didn't care. He wanted Bowe's hide.

But Bowe was serious about answering questions about his character. Four years earlier, archrival Lennox Lewis had knocked out Bowe in the Seoul Olympics, and word spread that Bowe didn't have any heart.

It hurt, and Bowe took it out on the undefeated Holyfield.

Slowly, Bowe's big right hands began to wear Holyfield down. His jab was sterling and his body shots were stunning for a man so big. Guys who stand 6-5 aren't supposed to go to the body like that. On this night, Riddick Bowe was Joe Frazier.

By Round 10, Holyfield was ripe, and Bowe pounced. A right to the body followed by a right uppercut stiffened Holyfield before he sagged sideways to the ropes. Bowe unloaded, primed to take the heavyweight championship right there.

Holyfield refused to go down, and by round's end, had managed an assault of his own. The pair of warriors tapped each other respectfully as the bell rang, and the show of mutual admiration signified that Bowe had already won one fight.

He had shed that "heartless" tag.

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When Round 11 began, a refueled Bowe attacked some more, finally putting Holyfield down. From there, it was Bowe advancing, and Holyfield retreating. The unanimous decision after 12 brutal rounds was a formality.

Bowe had won the heavyweight title, and his future appeared limitless.

But a funny thing happened on the way to greatness: Bowe, this guy who showed so much discipline against Holyfield, lacked any semblance of it when it came to the dinner table. He blew out trialhorse Jesse Ferguson on May 22, 1993, and appeared invincible doing it.

But then he got distracted and began to eat.

It didn't help that then-manager Rock Newman decided to parade him in Somalia and to meet Pope John Paul II in an Ali-like world tour. It made Bowe a lot of friends, but did nothing to capitalize on his momentum.

Even legendary trainer Eddie Futch admitted that Bowe's fall from greatness was a direct result of this senseless tour and the distractions that came with it.

By the time he met Holyfield in a rematch almost a year to the day after the original, Bowe was on his way to becoming a bloated has-been. He fought well enough that night to lose a close decision, but it was a disappointing Bowe in light of his performance a year earlier.

Bowe looked like himself one more time, knocking out Jose Luis Gonzalez in seven rounds on June 17, 1995, though that may have been more a result of Gonzalez's ineptitude than a reborn Bowe. By July 11, 1996, when he beat Andrew Golota via controversial DQ, Bowe was done.

The Golota rematch on Dec. 14, 1996, was almost too painful to watch. Bowe was a ghost of his former self in the ring, and outside the ring, he was displaying concerning speech patterns.

He never fought again, and went to jail - which wasn't such a bad thing if it meant keeping him out of the ring.

Now he's out of jail, and talking comeback - just as they all do. And, of course, some back-alley promoter will take advantage, looking to squeeze the last nickel out of a once-great athlete.

This promoter just may be squeezing the life out of him as well.

Riddick Bowe has no business in a boxing ring, period. And, if you want an example of the potential results, look no further than Meldrick Taylor. Well-spoken and charming in his youth, Taylor is pretty much incomprehensible these days.

And you can blame greed - whether it's a promoter, a manager or a friend looking to make the quick buck.

But boxing fans won't remember the struggling Bowe - regardless of what happens in the

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future. No, his legacy will always be that magic fall night at the Thomas & Mack Center. The night he dismantled an all-time great, and provided boxing fans with an extraordinary memory.