There was supposed to be a heavyweight title fight at Madison Square Garden in April. WBC champion Vitali Klitschko was to defend his belt against former champion Hasim Rahman. The bout was postponed when Klitschko suffered an injury in training. This left me with two questions: Did anyone notice? Did anyone care?

There was a time when it didn't get any better than a heavyweight title fight at the Garden. But the state of the division – multiple titles held by mediocre fighters – left me feeling a bit ambivalent about the cancellation. And in times like this, I find comfort in the past. Unlike Mark McGwire, once a heavyweight in another sport, I am here to talk about the past.

Today's heavyweight talent pool has left me yearning for Ali, Frazier, Foreman – or even the second-coming of Foreman.

The era of Ali, Frazier and Foreman is largely considered the best in heavyweight history. It's tough to argue against that notion. While the time frame may vary among analysts, I'd define this Golden Age from 1964 to 1978. It's starts with Ali beating Sonny Liston and ends with Larry Holmes defeating Ken Norton.

First, let's look at the roster of champions. It includes Ali, Joe Frazier, George Foreman, Ken Norton and Larry Holmes. When Holmes becomes eligible, each of them will be enshrined in the Hall of Fame. Other champions include Ernie Terrell and Jimmy Ellis, both very good fighters. The list of quality contenders during the same period includes former champs Liston and Floyd Patterson, as well as Jerry Quarry, George Chuvalo, Earnie Shavers and Ron Lyle.

Wait. It's get better. Consider these fighters as contenders who in an aggregate poll might occupy slots in the range of 7 through 10 in the division's Top 10: Zora Folley, Chuck Wepner, Joe Bugner, Jimmy Young, Buster Mathis, Mac Foster and Oscar Bonavena

We are talking about a talent pool that has been unparalleled in the history of the division. Perhaps its depth is rivaled only by the middleweight fighters of the 1940s and 1950s. Or maybe it is rivaled by the heavyweights of 1988 to 1999.

Did I just commit boxing blasphemy? Perhaps. With the passage of time, however, I think the heavyweight era of Mike Tyson and Evander Holyfield will compare favorably with that of Ali and company. I define this era as starting with Tyson's knockout of Michael Spinks in 1988 to Lennox Lewis' win over Evander Holyfield in 1999.

Let's compare.

Since the proliferation of alphabet titles flourished after the previous era, I will only include the best titleholders in the roster of champions: Mike Tyson, Evander Holyfield, Riddick Bowe and Lennox Lewis. Much like the previous era, each of these fighters will be enshrined in Canastota,

New York.

The list of less distinguished champions and quality contenders has Michael Moorer, Buster Douglas, Razor Ruddock, Ray Mercer and Alex Stewart. A good list, but a bit less robust than the Golden Age.

If there is one element that distinguishes each period, it is the collection of second-tier contenders (or lesser champions). From the Tyson-Holyfield era we have Frank Bruno, Bruce Seldon, Andrew Golota, Oliver McCall and Tommy Morrison

But consider this point. As I said, the passage of time may help this era. In 15 years, will Frank Bruno be compared more favorably to Jimmy Ellis or Floyd Patterson? Will Andrew Golota, whose stock has risen a bit after two recent title-fight losses, rank similar to Chuck Wepner?

I think so.

Another characteristic that I believe defines a great era is the fights it produces. We are all familiar with the Ali-Frazier-Foreman fights. Foreman-Lyle was a thriller and Holmes' gutsy win over Norton was also a fantastic fight. But let us not overlook the Tyson-Holyfield series, the Bowe-Holyfield series, Holyfield-Foreman and the electricity and interest that Tyson-Spinks produced. To a lesser degree, who wasn't on the edge of their seat during Michael Moorer-Bert Cooper?

There are two prominent individuals who have straddled both eras – promoter Don King and two-time heavyweight champion George Foreman. On separate occasions, I asked each man which era was better.

King, of course, promoted Ali-Foreman, Ali-Frazier III and many Tyson fights, including his pair against Holyfield. When I approached King he was days away from a heavyweight card at the Garden and was in full hype mode. I asked him which era he favored and he cackled the way only Don King can cackle. Then he began talking about Chris Byrd and John Ruiz, doing his best to incorporate his current promotion into each answer he provided the media on this day.

I endured and asked again which era the promoter favored. Finally, he paused, which I felt was an accomplishment in itself; but, still possessing a promotional interest in Holyfield at the time, King committed without actually committing.

"Ali, Frazier, Big George Foreman, they are legends," he said. "People are still sitting in barrooms talking about those fights. The boxing fan will never forget those great fights."

I took that as a vote for the Golden Age.

When I asked Foreman, he was equally elusive. At the time, he was still broadcasting for HBO and was working a fight in Atlantic City. I believe Foreman skirted the question out of respect for his opponents and not because he was concerned about tarnishing the appeal of a future broadcast.

"That’s a tough question," he said.

Foreman had sampled the opposition of both eras. He fought Frazier, Norton, Ali and top-level contenders like Chuvalo and Lyle. When he returned to boxing in 1987 his comeback culminated with a knockout of Moorer to win the IBF title. Along the way he also traded punches with Holyfield and Stewart.

"When I first turned pro, there were so many good fighters around," he said. "Do you know how good Jerry Quarry was? I didn’t want to fight the man. Then when you start talking about Ali, you are talking about the crème of the crop."

Another vote for the Golden Age. But when asked how Holyfield would have fared in that era, Foreman added, "I have the utmost respect for Evander Holyfield. He’s a warrior who would have been able to compete in any era."

To solicit an opinion from a fighter who competed exclusively in one of the two eras would probably not produce an accurate response. Most athletes are generally inclined to favor the time they competed over other eras.

It’s hard to argue with King and Foreman, but I will. Just give it some time and the Holyfield-Bowe trilogy will start to resemble the Ali-Frazier trilogy. History sometimes is a bit kinder to the things we take for granted as they are happening.

Besides, the more we see of John Ruiz and company, the better Michael Moorer begins to look.