

Norman Stone: Rolling Stone Gathers Moss

Written by Rick Folstad
Sunday, 03 April 2005 18:00

Where did Norman “Stoney” Stone come from and why isn’t he selling used cars?

Manger, trainer, fast-talker and part-time troublemaker, Stoney is the guy you want standing outside your strip joint drumming up business, talking trash and insulting young men as they try to walk by. He’d fill the joint within minutes if he didn’t get jumped first.

If you don’t know who Stoney is, he’s the manager of WBA heavyweight champion John Ruiz, aka “The Quietman,” though lately Ruiz hasn’t been living up to the name.

Among other things, being a manager means Stoney is supposed to watch over Ruiz, make sure he eats right, gets to bed on time and stays out of mean bars.

His job is to make sure his fighter is where he’s supposed to be, saying what he’s supposed to say, winning when he’s supposed to win.

Of course, the role of babysitter isn’t always an easy one, especially when the responsibility has been handed over to Ruiz like a collection plate on Easter Sunday. Suddenly the guy who is getting most of the attention isn’t the same guy who is answering the bell for the 11th round. It’s as though Ruiz not only has to fight his own fight, he has to make sure Stoney doesn’t start one of his own.

Ruiz (41-5-1, 28 KOs) is scheduled to defend his title April 30 at Madison Square Garden (HBO) against James “Lights Out” Toney (68-4-2, 43 KOs), the former middleweight champ turned heavyweight braggart who has brought swagger and audacity back to a dying division.

So to help sell tickets to a title fight that might need some serious work, the two camps got together Tuesday in New York City for a little press conference to announce the fight, or, in simpler terms, to start selling tickets.

And that’s where Stoney and Toney went to work, selling tickets, shouting and posturing and threatening each other, causing a few voices to be raised and a few obscenities to be censored.

What a strange way to make a living.

Putting those two in the same room together would be a felony in most states. It’s like asking Ike to sing happy birthday to Tina, like asking Superman to share his lunch with Lex Luther. You don’t ask these two to share the same room unless you’re willing to pay for damages.

Or unless you want to sell tickets.

That’s why you make sure they both received their invitation and got there on time.

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For Stoney, Tuesday's sideshow was just another circus act performed under the big top. Back in November, when Ruiz beat Andrew Golota, Stoney got so caught up in the fight, he began loudly cursing the referee and later handed the referee a roll of tape, telling him to tape Ruiz glove if he wanted it done.

He was then kicked out of Ruiz's corner for the last four rounds of the fight.

Tuesday, like before, he was just sticking up for himself.

Way to go, Stoney. Grab the headlines.

What's the name of your fighter again?