

Name a Fighter, Name a Heavyweight

Written by Rick Folstad
Tuesday, 12 July 2005 19:00

Gimme a name.

Think about it for a second, then give me the name of the first prizefighter to pop into your head. I'm not talking about Joe Louis, Rocky Marciano or Roberto Duran. I'm talking about a guy who still fights for a living. Someone who, when we hear his name, we'll all nod our heads, smile and say, "Yeah, I know who he is. I just saw him fight not long ago."

I'll give you a second to see what name you can come up with.

Dum-de-dum-de-dum.

Time's up.

Sure, you thought of a name, but you've got to admit, it took a little longer than it used to. And I'll bet my wife's next paycheck that it isn't the same name I came up with. No one fighter immediately leaps to the front of the pack.

Fifteen years ago, it wasn't like that. Fifteen years ago if you asked your tax accountant that question, he'd probably say Mike Tyson, though he'd also explain to you that he's not a fight fan and he's never been to a real live fight. But he knows about Mike Tyson because, after all, he's the heavyweight champion of the world. Everyone knows who the heavyweight champion of the world is.

Of course, fifteen years ago Buster Douglas was the heavyweight champ, but you get the point.

Thirty years ago, the name everyone would have muttered would have been Muhammad Ali. Thirty years ago, even your kid sister's favorite hairdresser from Sweden knew who Muhammad Ali was.

Ask that question today of the average insurance agent or auto mechanic on the street ("Quick, name the first present-day boxer to come to your head") and you'll probably get a blank stare. After a few moments, he might come up with a local hero or some fighter he remembers from back when he was in high school.

"Larry Holmes. Is he still fighting? Or that Spinks kid, what's his name, Leon? Weren't there a couple of brothers? I think I heard the Spinks name not too long ago."

Sorry, fella. That was Cory Spinks.

"How about that tall guy from England, Lennox something."

And you wonder why a movie like "Cinderella Man" is struggling at the box office, and "The

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Contender” series was a flop on TV. “Million Dollar Baby” made it big, but they had a heavyweight of their own in Clint Eastwood.

We all know that as the heavyweight division goes, so goes boxing. Following that sad line of reasoning, I’m surprised the game is still alive. In fact, there are some evil skeptics out there who would argue that the game isn’t alive, hasn’t been breathing on its own since Tyson spit out the upper portion of Evander Holyfield’s ear.

What’s more, there are other skeptics who say the fight game is doomed, that it won’t come back from the dead this time like it has done so many other times in the past.

Resurrection? Not in our lifetime buddy, not unless we can find a savior.

What we need is a dominating, charismatic, undisputed heavyweight champ who likes children and animals and who visits hospitals between fights. He doesn’t beat his wife or snort coke, and every time he has something to say, you want to listen.

Gimme a name.