First came the footage from Germany. It was Norman "Stoney" Stone clutching the WBA belt that his fighter, John Ruiz, just lost on a disputed decision to Nicolay Valuev in a heavyweight title fight. What followed was a melee, which all too often followed the manager.

As the footage drew to a close, Stone was nailed with a punch.

My thought was, he probably had that coming.

Then, a few days later, came the press release announcing that Stone has retired from managing fighters.

My thought was, I can live with that.

Then I thought some more.

That's when I realized that boxing is going to miss one Norman Stone. Perhaps not his antics or his diatribes or his temper, but the sport will certainly miss his passion, his loyalty and his dedication. These are traits not routinely found in this game of ours.

I came up old school. My father, Bobby Cassidy, boxed from 1963 to 1980. Over that span he engaged in 80 pro fights and was ranked from junior middleweight to light heavyweight. He later trained Lonnie Bradley and Donny Lalonde when they were champions.

And this is what I learned from the old man. Respect. Respect your opponent and respect the game. When my father fought for his fighters, he did it away from the spotlight.

Too often, I felt that Stone grabbed the spotlight from his fighter and failed to respect his sport.

I understand that things can change in the heat of battle. Was my pop beneath driving home a low blow to prove a point? Nope. But 80 pro fights and he never climbed on top of the ring ropes. Not even after winning main events at the Garden. He never taunted an opponent. When I was a kid playing high school football he instructed me to just hand the ball to the referee and walk away after scoring a touchdown. So that’s what I did.

So, you can see how Norman "Stoney" Stone would bother me.

In the press release, Stone said: "I'm done. I'm tired of boxing and last week's bad decision was the last straw. I'm going to relax with my family and spend a lot of time with my two little grandchildren. I'll always support Johnny (Ruiz). Even in retirement I'll be covering his back. I'm sorry if my actions sometimes upset people, but I always had John's best interests at heart. It was a great ride."

That second to last sentence crystallizes all of it. First, he apologized, which already makes him better than Pete Rose, Mark McGwire, Rafael Palmiero and Mike Tyson, men who won't take responsibility for their actions. And I truly believe that he always had Ruiz's best interests at heart. Their story is well documented. Their relationship dates back to the fighter's days as an amateur and Stone stuck with the kid when no one else did.

They reached the pinnacle of their sport together – the heavyweight championship of the world. And while Ruiz was often criticized for his performance, one would be hard-pressed to criticize his effort. Known as "The Quietman," Ruiz often let the criticism roll off his back. But Stone isn't built that way. He fired right back, whether it was an opponent, a rival trainer or a referee.

"I'm sorry to see him go," Ruiz said in the same statement. "We've been together for 20 years and it was an up-and-down, roller coaster ride. It's going to be tough moving on without him."

In 2002, Stone was named co-manager of the year by the Boxing Writers Association of America. It was an honor that was well deserved. He shared the distinction that year with Klaus Peter-Kohl, who managed the Klitschkos. True to form, Stoney ruffled some feathers during his reception speech. A veteran of the Vietnam War, he asked the audience to support our troops in Iraq, which wasn't popular then and far less popular now. He threw his support to Massachusetts Senator John Kerry to unseat President George W. Bush and he challenged Kohl to put either of the Klitschkos in the ring with his fighter.

Some people gasped. Some people cringed. I laughed.

I met Stone later at a public workout Ruiz held while preparing to put his heavyweight title on the line against James Toney. The media was waiting and Stone walked in and shook hands with every member of the press. He may or may not have known who was there to rip him and his fighter and who wasn't. It didn't matter. He was accessible to all.

Since I am from New Yawk and I root for the Yankees (not the Red Sox) and wasn't particularly keen on any senator from Massachusetts, we didn't have much in common.

Except boxing.

And a few friends. One guy – a former colleague at Newsday who writes for another boxing website – sang Stone's virtues to me. I listened. I absorbed it all – the good and the bad.

In Boston, they have come to tolerate the antics of outfielder Manny Ramirez as "Manny being Manny." A World Series title and five straight years of 100-plus RBIs buys that kind of latitude. So in boxing, let's chalk it up to "Stoney being Stoney."

He strikes me as the type of guy whom you love when he's on your side but despise when he's against you.

In the end, this is what I know. You want a guy like Stone in your corner.

Enjoy those grandkids.