

The Book of Floyd Is No Fairy Tale

Written by Michael Katz
Thursday, 06 April 2006 19:00

LAS VEGAS, April 7 – Once upon a time, not so terribly long ago, and not so terribly far from Stanley Ketchel’s final resting place, a star lit the Michigan night and Floyd Mayweather Jr. was born.

Three wise trainers from Michigan came to pay homage. They were Jack Blackburn, Eddie Futch and Emanuel Steward, but the baby boy was already swaddled in family. His father, Floyd Sr., and his uncles, Roger and Jeff, would take the natural under their collective wings and let him soar to his ordained greatness. The celestial P.A. system played Jelly Roll Morton singing, “Michigan water tastes like sherry wine/Mississippi water tastes like turpentine.”

These, then, are the chronicles of Pretty Boy, the legendary boxer who has risen from Grand Rapids to what the Great Profit (cq) Arum has hailed as the greatest fighter of all time, or at least since Muhammad Ali, who tomorrow night at the Thomas & Mack Arena here, and for \$45 in most other parishes, will punish the infidel Zabdiel in 12 rounds or less.

He was ordained to box. When he talked of perhaps becoming a carpenter or bricklayer, his grandmother told him, nay, “You were born to greatness in the ring.”

Yea, verily, in utero, Pretty Boy disturbed his sainted mother who believed he was working 12 rounds a day even before birth.

“Feel my stomach,” she would say. “Feel how he’s feinting to his right and throwing the double jab.”

Father, son and holy shadowboxer would have to withstand many doubting dougl-asses who still refuse to anoint Pretty Boy, as if the 35 undefeated feats he has already performed count for naught.

Yet even as the nonbelievers sacrilegiously demean the recent miracles, in the year 2005 alone against Henry Bruseles, Arturo Gatti and Sharmba Mitchell, the legend grows. The infidels want him to wake the dead or part the Red Sea, but Pretty Boy and his disciples have worked some great out-of-ring tricks, too.

From the prodigal son who kicked his father out of the house, a self-styled gangsta who moved to Sin City and tried to live up to its name, Pretty Boy has recently been cleansed and baptized anew. He undergone a religious metamorphosis, an epiphany, and is now the Good Samaritan, who according to revelations given to Saint Kevin, once spotted an entire tribe of shivering Michiganders and bought all 300 children winter outfits.

He has fed the hungry and homeless and what wonders await? Maybe he’ll stop the slaughter in Darfur, once he makes sure no Judah will betray him.

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For the very great, of course, there are no limits. Wilfred Benitez used to call himself the “bible of boxing.” There is a New Testament and Pretty Boy’s edition is finally crossing the line, from boxing into hotel room drawers. Even the Profit Arum, one of his early doubters, now answers “never” when he doth see a Mayweather defeat.

This is the same Arum, of course, who has been trying to get Pretty Boy into a duel with Antonio Margarito, a blasphemer from Tijuana who also raises money for the Profit’s Top Rank church. Arum says he has already reserved July 29 for this confrontation of biblical proportions.

Thou shalt not believe it. After Judah is addressed tomorrow night, Pretty Boy will surely pass over Margarito and embark on a pilgrimage to boxing’s Mega, Oscar De La Hoya – a disciple of Pretty Boy’s father and a betrayer of the Profit Arum.

Mayweather’s story has a life of its own and let us pray there can be no other ending to this tale. Somehow, while beating Bruseles, Gatti and Mitchell, Pretty Boy is now, according to the Profit, a greater fighter than Sugar Ray Leonard, greater than Roberto Duran, Marvelous Marvin Hagler, Pernell Whitaker or Roy Jones Jr. in his prime.

Amen.

JUDAH’S KISS: Zab Judah, according to Tiny Tim Smith of the New York Daily News, owes much to Don King – but the promoter refuses to put a dollar sign on it. Judah, who blew the welterweight title by showing up unprepared and unfocused in January against Carlos Baldomir, can only make enough to pay his debts if tomorrow night’s bout does unexpectedly big business. Okay, it will be a sellout at Thomas & Mack, but how many people are going to spend \$45 on a fight that seems so one-sided that Mayweather has gone up to 6-1 favoritism?

Judah, who like many fighters takes advances on future purses, was so distraught about how much he would clear for facing the sweetest scientist of all, he has not worked at selling the bout. Mayweather has joked that he didn’t expect to shut Judah’s big mouth so quickly, but while I believe Pretty Boy will emerge victorious, this is not your usual 6-1 mismatch.

Judah can fight and his career is on the line. He will be desperate. Naturally the Judah who lost to Baldomir will not be in the ring tomorrow night. But neither will Baldomir. This is no knock on Judah, but Mayweather should win easily and quickly. The operative word is “should.”

Mayweather is faster, probably stronger, and has a much better chin. As Arum says, he knows what punch the opponent is going to throw before the opponent THINKS about throwing it. But I am not ready to sanctify him as the greatest development since my Aunt Ettie’s chopped liver. At 135, does Arum really think Mayweather would have beaten Duran or Whitaker?

PENTHOUSE: Gene Kilroy, the Great Facilitator, is throwing a little 93d birthday bash tonight at the Luxor for the great Budd Schulberg, whose works include “The Harder They Fall” and the screenplay for “On the Waterfront.”

OUTHOUSE: Rosendo Alvarez, who supplied the only blemish on Ricardo Lopez’s record – a

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draw – has never been one to pay too much attention to the rules of the game. But he's been landing a constant low blow in calling his opponent tomorrow night, Jorge Arce, a "faggot." Arce, better than a 3-1 favorite to shut up Alvarez, landed the best line at the ritual final press conference yesterday for "Sworn Enemies," a title that seems more befitting of the semifinal than the main event.

"If you spend a night with me, you're going to love me," Arce told Alvarez.

MORE DIS AND THAT: No, it isn't for any title, no matter what the IBF felons say. The only title on the line is Mayweather's pound-for-pound standing. Which reminds me of what Pernell Whitaker said before his fight with Julio Cesar Chavez. Ostensibly, Whitaker's WBC welterweight title was on the line, but the Sweet Pea said "He can have that belt if he wants it, if I can find it. I think it's in a closet somewhere." Whitaker said he wasn't concerned with the judges, either, because the whole world would witness who was really the best fighter "pound-for-pound." He was right. The judges made it a draw and everyone in the game, except for Chavez and Jose Sulaiman, knew who was the Boss Boxer. After the fight, Whitaker in effect said, "I told you so" why he wasn't disgusted with the official decision. Yeah, he didn't care – but I bet on him to win, not draw.

Do not belittle Mayweather for taking this fight. He's not to blame this isn't a real welterweight championship bout. He agreed to fight Judah before the embarrassing fight with Baldomir. There were no convenient substitutes and Arum hoped he could still sell Mayweather-Judah on the basis that no one would hold Zab to his January performance....A suggestion to Arum if he can't get Mayweather to fight Margarito in July. Go after Ricky Hatton. That's a fight I'd love to see and, don't tell Arum, I think Hatton wins big....If Wladimir Klitschko and Oleg Maskaev beat Chris Byrd and Hasim Rahman, respectively, to join Sergei Liahkovich and Nicolai Valuev as heavyweight strap-holders, 86 from the bar to the first who dub them the "White Russians."...Good luck to Lamon Brewster on recovery from his detached retina, but I don't think that was the reason he lost to Liahkovich even though the accident occurred in the opening round. He could see well enough to have his opponent in trouble in the fifth and seventh rounds.