

Mayweather-Judah: The Moment of Truth

Written by Benn Schulberg
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“Pretty Boy” Floyd Mayweather and Zab “Super” Judah are set to do battle tonight at the Thomas & Mack Center in Las Vegas for the IBF welterweight championship. Yes, Judah is defending his title despite losing his WBC belt to Carlos Baldomir in his supposed tune-up bout back in January. Thanks to Baldomir for not paying his sanctioning fee and the IBF for deciding not to make the title vacant and instead leaving it in the hands of the “former” champion, Zab Judah will enter the ring against Mayweather carrying his belt. For Pretty Boy, it will be a chance to conquer his fourth weight class and cement his claim as the pound-for-pound greatest fighter in our sport.

Championship fight or not, this is a BIG fight that features two combatants who are ready to prove their greatness. Mayweather, 35-0, is on the way to the BHOF en route to possibly becoming one of the most spectacular fighters in boxing history, and Judah, 34-3-1, a three-time world champion, is now fighting for his livelihood and reputation.

What makes boxing such a dramatic and intense sport is how quickly lives can be forever altered. A single hour can change the course of a fighter’s career for better or worse. No matter how good you once were or how much talent you have, it can all be forgotten in a night’s work.

For Zab Judah, Saturday night is his make or break moment as he attempts to rebound from the most disappointing loss of his career against the man many experts believe to be unbeatable. A bad loss for Judah would be a fatal blow, possibly ending his career, while a win over the pound-for-pound king would catapult his standing as not just a good fighter, but a great one.

Judah has been sworn to silence in preparation for this most important of tests, vowing that he would come to Las Vegas more focused than ever before. At Thursday’s final press conference, Judah rose from the dais, decked out with sunglasses and a hoodie, and finally broke his silence.

“This is something I’ve prepared my whole life for. Come Saturday night I gotta trick for you (Mayweather). He already knows,” Judah said.

Tricking Mayweather is no easy task as the betting odds signify, listing Judah as a 5-1 underdog. The key to this fight though seems to be whether or not Judah will be able to use his speed, movement, and southpaw style to disrupt Mayweather’s gameplan. If he is able to keep his opponent off-balance and upset his rhythm enough to be able to gain control of the fight, then we’d be looking at a remarkable upset. But that’s One Big ‘If.’

Roger Mayweather, uncle and trainer to Floyd, reminded us, as well as the Judah camp why his nephew is the best fighter in the world. “He (Zab) already knows what Floyd can do. I don’t have to tell Zab, his father, what Floyd can do. He already knows.”

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Uncle Roger also reminded us of the infamous sparring session that Mayweather and Judah had last year that supposedly ended with Judah leaving the ring after a couple rounds with a damaged ego after being thoroughly outclassed. This incident has now gained wide acclaim thanks in large part to Uncle Roger whose speculative story is hard not to believe considering the silent response of the Judah camp.

Yoel Judah's podium comments only further fueled Roger's performance.

"Watch what you ask for, dynamite is coming. You said Zab's got power, heart, but no chin, well you better check yours," the father and trainer to Zab said.

Roger defended his nephew to the point of daring Yoel Judah to make a bet that Zab would win and promising to pay out if it happened. In response to Yoel's warning about what his son is going to do Saturday night, Roger said, "Mr. Judah said be careful what you ask for. Well Floyd knows what he's getting into because he's been there (referring to the sparring session). He already knows what Floyd can do."

To his credit, Floyd Mayweather refused to badmouth his opponent, focusing only on the fight in front of him and exuding supreme confidence.

"It doesn't matter what nobody says, I know what it takes. There may be guys who are physically stronger than me, but there's no one who can match me mentally. I'm happy and comfortable. I know in my heart that I'll win. I know that I'm the best fighter in boxing."

Demarcus "Chop Chop" Corley, who fought both Judah and Mayweather, agreed with Floyd's assertion that his mental toughness is what's given him the edge in all his fights and will carry him to victory once more. "Mayweather will win because he's mentally stronger and the smarter fighter."

Not according to co-promoter Don King, who said "I love each and every one of them (the Mayweathers), but you can't stop destiny."

He went on to prophesize what's going to happen come Saturday night.

"Zab is in the shadow and in the darkness comes the light. I resurrect people from the dead and bring them alive," insisted King. "He's going out there and is going to seek and destroy – Floyd's never met someone as ferocious. King Kong will seem like a piper compared to this man."

His longtime adversary and co-promoter for this fight, Bob Arum, gleamed with confidence as he described his fighter's talents. "When I first signed him this kid really stunned me by not only his skills, but his ring intelligence, which few even great fighters have. He ain't gonna lose a fight ever. This will be a good fight but he ain't gonna lose to anybody," Arum said.

Zab Judah's "code of silence" broke in dramatic fashion as the press conference drew to a close with both fighters posing face-to-face for pictures. Judah stared intently at Mayweather

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and starting jawing at him. When members of his camp joined in on the trashtalking it seemed as if we might have a fight right then and there. Visibly agitated by certain comments made by Judah, Mayweather finally lost his cool and had to be pulled back by his handlers. The promotional title for this fight is "Sworn Enemies," and for good reason.

Judah continued his verbal assault on Mayweather at Friday's weigh-in, yelling at him with furious rage as he walked out of the Roman amphitheatre at Casesar's Palace. "Tomorrow night, tomorrow night," Judah kept barking. With Mayweather out of sight, Judah stood on the stage scowling triumphantly as if he had scared his opponent away. Is this a sign of confidence or a way of masking his self-doubt? That's the question to which we are all eagerly awaiting the answer.

Notes: Judah weighed-in at 145½ lbs. and Mayweather at 146. The welterweight limit is 147 lbs. The fight will be shown on HBO PPV for \$44.95. Arum and King have been arm-in-arm praising each other for their promotional successes. This isn't the first time these two have come together...there have been a number of fights including De La Hoya-Trinidad, which still holds the record for the largest PPV sales for a non-heavyweight fight. As of Friday, this fight had sold over 14,000 tickets with a couple thousand tickets left. As Arum said, "This event is a tremendous success thanks to my co-promoter Don King for working hard." I thought these guys were sworn enemies...Finally, the Diego Corrales-Jose Luis Castillo III press conference that was supposed to be held Friday afternoon was inexplicably cancelled. Joe Goossen, Corrales' trainer, was mystified as to the reason for it but happy to stay at camp. Corrales has begun his training camp in L.A. in anticipation for the June 3 showdown.