

Shannon Briggs: People Want To See Blood

Written by Michael Woods
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Scales are banned in the Shannon Briggs household.

Go ahead, go into his home, bring a tracking bloodhound if you want.

You won't find a scale in there.

At his gym, he won't step on a scale, either.

"I hate scales," Briggs told TSS at the Palm restaurant in Midtown Manhattan on Tuesday afternoon. "I'm eating, training and lifting. I'm like George Foreman, pulling cars, pushing cars, chopping wood."

This repudiation of weight measurement devices coincided with an epiphany of another sort. Not that long ago, Briggs was sofa and channel surfing.

He parked on ESPN Classic, and watched Ali and Tyson marathons.

He studied Ali's peerless grace and fluidity and drank it in, awed.

Then he watched Tyson's savagery in full bloom, and had a new appreciation for his Brooklyn bro's bad-mother intensity.

Tyson's way of working, his unmitigated yearning to put his opponent into a state of unconsciousness, his complete and total investment in one desired finish, the separation of his opponent's body and his head, seeped into Brigg's brain.

It made perfect sense to him now, especially in this day and age. He didn't waste much time on diagnosing society's ills, or trying to ascertain why men (and some ladies) enjoy watching the controlled mayhem that is one man exerting his will to bludgeon another into submission. He just bought in.

In March of 2003, Briggs, the Brownsville basher, put his newfound method of operating to the test. In Fort Lauderdale, he tried to knock Marvin Hill's head off his neck. The result was a first round TKO and since then, 10 other opponents have met Hill's fate. They submitted to Briggs, via KO or TKO. In his mind, Briggs is giving the people, the paying public, what they want.

"That's what people want," he says. "People want to see blood."

This isn't a put-on shtick, a stab at a persona, a promotional gambit to hype his latest run. Briggs is a tad conflicted at his newborn bloodthirstiness.

"I'm doing this for money," he says. "But this is a job. The customers are getting what they

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want."

And what Briggs wants, and he'll say it with no apologies or hedging, is money.

Hundreds of millions, in fact.

He's accrued some solid purses since kicking off his pro career in 1992, and made a sackful of moolah as an icon in Japan, where he fought K1 and hawked sodas.

But if you think perhaps the 34-year-old Briggs, who had a crack at Lennox Lewis' WBC crown in 1998, but was knocked down three times and lost a TKO5 in Atlantic City, is looking to get svelte for what could well be his final run, you'd be wrong.

225 is so 1995, to Briggs.

He weighed 273 when he hammered Chris Koval in Cedric Kushner's Hammerstein Show on May 24, and he will not apologize for that.

Former trainer Teddy Atlas likes to bust his chops and chide him for his frame. They kidded each other on Friday Night Fights a while back, and Briggs labeled himself portly. But he's over that self-lacerating kick. That joshing with Atlas was most likely a preemptive strike, as he knows full well that Atlas will look askance at excess girth, and make his stance known.

"I don't weigh myself," Briggs says when asked what he's walking around at. "I'm simply trying to perfect the art of the one-punch kayo."

If the rumor holds, and Briggs gets a crack at Wladimir Klitschko in November, the heavyweight doesn't worry that his poundage will put him at a disadvantage.

"I've never been touted as having great stamina," he says. "Wladimir doesn't have great stamina either. He'll get tired too. I'm training for a KO."

A few days ago, trainer Emanuel Steward told TSS that he thinks Briggs is the most dangerous early round hitter in the division. Briggs read the piece on TSS, and commented.

"He understands my philosophy," Briggs says. "Me and Klitschko is a great fight. It's like two dinosaurs, whoever gets tired first or caught first...Manny knows I'm a puncher."

Briggs ran through the methods by which he disposed his last 11 victims and almost apologized for sounding ruthless.

"I hate to sound barbaric. It's just what the people want. I need to feed my family. I'm not barbaric outside the ring. If I'm selling flowers, say, I'm going to try and sell flowers the best way possible."

As for his desire to reap "hundreds of millions" in the next two or so years, Briggs has a ready

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reply as to why he needs Bill Gates money.

"It's the price of gas," he says, laughing. "It's going up. I'm going to need that money. My son, he's eight, his school is 20 grand a year. I'm sh** outta luck. I got to knock people out."

This new Briggs, ravenous for blood, eager to inflict neurological trauma every time he steps into the ring, is on a mission as soon as his eyes open to start the day, he says.

"I wake up, and think punishment," Briggs declares. "You have to condition yourself to think, 'I want to see blood.'"

And if Briggs has made peace with his waistline, he has made another concession to his age, and amended his nightlife habits to indicate the seriousness of his title and moneymaking quest.

"I don't have much of a social life," he says. "Before, I'd go to the club Friday and I'd come back Wednesday. I was partying hard, the Hamptons, Aruba, LA."

Any supermodel conquests, Shan? Didja get with Paris maybe? Or exchange more than cell phone numbers with Lohan?

"I don't kiss and tell," Briggs says, and chuckles. "But I had to change that part of my life. It was hard for me."

That he's still running is a credit to his perseverance. His mom was a nurse, but had a weakness for illicit distractions. She'd go out on runs, and leave young Shannon behind in their apartment. His pop had checked out before he knew him. His stepfather got stung on a manslaughter rap and died in jail. He moved in with an aunt and negotiated the brutal streets of East New York, staying away from trouble enough to take a shot at the 1992 Olympics. A hand injury derailed that path, but he kept running. He reunited with his mom and put up money for her rehab. He's had managerial woes, had nasty splits with trainers, lost fights in embarrassing fashion, lost his will to compete, split his energies chasing an acting and rapping jones.

"I'm 34," Briggs says. "I don't know if this is my last run. I don't think of it as my first run or last run. I'm just running."