In boxing, if you're only as good, bad, or ugly as your latest fight, there could be plenty of justifiable hope left for Evander Holyfield.

Holyfield looked relatively sharp, strong, and definitely crowd-pleasing on Friday night, creaming perfect foil Jeremy Bates for a 2nd round TKO in an entertaining mismatch from Dallas broadcast nationwide by Fox Sports Net.

Bates, 21-12-1 (18), an insurance salesman from West Virginia, reportedly came out of pugilistic retirement for a one-shot spotlight opportunity.

Bates, 225½, landed one good shot, a right in the second session. Other than that, it was almost a perfect practice payday for Holyfield, 220, who also had a piece of the promotion. Holyfield got to scrape off some rust, and he proved he was still a very marketable commodity.

"It feels great to show the people I wasn't old," said Holyfield. "It was just injuries (before). I was able to slip punches tonight. I actually wanted to hit him with crisper shots but I didn't want to let him get back in the fight and make it harder."

"I may have struck out but I struck out swinging," mused the engaging Bates accurately.

Holyfield was coming back from a twenty-one month hiatus after a debacle against Larry Donald that led most observers to advise a respectable retirement. New York made the option mandatory there. Texas had a more welcoming commission, and Holyfield made their position look quite proper.

The old boy didn't look so bad. A great looking, extended finishing barrage prompted referee Rafael Ramos to properly jump in at 2:56 of the second in a set ten.

"How can he [still] be hungry?" was Bates's prefight question.

He wasn't the only curious party that showed up.

Promoters announced that well over 10,000 paying customers came to see what Holyfield had left. The count may have been unofficial, but as cameras panned the audience it was evident the overall box office probably didn't suffer.

It may not have been a swarm like the NBA Finals the house was used to, but it was certainly big-time sports showbiz.

"I'm looking for something better than I've been in about ten years," said Holyfield just prior to the fight.

Holyfield's strength coach Tim Hallmark sounded 100% sincere and convinced when he spoke of Holyfield's drawn out recovery period from a long time shoulder injury.

What it came down to tonight was whether or not Holyfield could get down to business. He did, and moved from outer space to back in position for another title shot.

"I'm looking forward to a top-ten fighter next," said Atlanta's finest, now 39-8-2 (25). "I wanted to see if I could look as good as I felt in the gym."

The stocky, brave Bates walked right into enough punches during their brief encounter to provide fine new highlight reel footage for Holyfield's next move.

Bates did land enough probing thuds to illustrate Holyfield's current defensive flaws.

Holyfield acknowledged that he still needed some work, but had renewed optimism. A couple months shy of his 44th birthday, Holyfield stated his current visionquest involved breaking George Foreman's age record for winning the heavyweight title, and unifying all the major belts in time for the '08 Olympics in Bejing.

Maybe he'll talk about growing wings and flying to Heaven. We'd never say that's impossible either.

Outside the American Airlines Center, shining liquid streams dance in various water fountain designs. Tonight they reflected a sea of shining stars overhead.

For Holyfield, inside the strands, it looked like there was still plenty to be sipped from the Fountain of Fistic Youth.