There are certain moments in boxing, where backroom bickering, contentious contract negotiations, and jaundiced judging are mere afterthoughts. These moments occur sporadically, but when they do, it reaffirms your love for the sport, your reason for placing it on a higher pedestal than all others.

A little more than 15 months ago, Ricky Hatton provided us with one of those moments.

Hatton, the working class kid from Manchester, England, had never been taken seriously as a major player on the world stage. He became a phenomenon in England, selling out arenas fighting guys as qualified as your gardener. Much like the Spice Girls, many of us stateside believed this British icon was more sizzle than substance. We thought he was protected, wrapped in the cocoon that was promoter Frank Warren's tightly wound web: as recently as 2004, he was still fighting also-rans like Carlos Vilches and Michael Stewart.

We all were convinced Hatton was another in a long line of Europeans unwilling to test their wares on American soil. Like Dariusz Michalczewski and Sven Ottke, we all thought he would be just another regional fighter scared of conquering the world.

When Hatton signed on to fight Kostya Tszyu, the robotic Russian with an anvil of a right hand, we all figured it was a ruse. Hatton would sign on for the fight, only to drop out with some mysterious injury as fight time approached. But on June 4, 2005, in front of a raucous hometown crowd at the MEN Arena in Manchester, the kid exploded through our living rooms.

With a sustained body attack and a fair share of grappling, Hatton wore down the old veteran. It was not pretty. It was not an exhibition of fluid boxing or debilitating power. Beyond the aesthetic unpleasantness, you could appreciate this go-for-broke kid looking to snag the title from the clutches of greatness. After 11 rounds, Hatton hopped off his stool, ready to finish the future hall-of-famer off. But he did not need to. Tsyzu's goose was cooked. He quit on his stool and Hatton's (to quote the most overused statement in boxing) star-making performance was complete.

At that moment of jubilation, you could not help but think this could be boxing's next international superstar. How could we not? Here was a humble everyman who could back up his bark with his share of bite. Claiming he was ready to conquer America, we prepared for the next British invasion.

Invasion? It was more like a whimper. After dusting off Carlos Maussa in Sheffield England, Hatton was talking about the mega-fights, the Mayweathers, Cottos, and Mosleys of the world. But those fights, for one reason or another, never transpired.

Instead, we were stuck with watching Hatton squeak by with a close unanimous decision against Luis Collazo last May in Boston.

In the aftermath of that fight, the bandwagon grew smaller. Hatton's tea and scones party was over. Now, his future is in doubt, and the kid will have to fight to stay in the picture

Since the Collazo debacle, there have been talks of fights with Oktay Urkal and Juan Urango. That's fine for a belt holder looking to pick up a couple of paydays. But for a once-upon-a-time potential superstar looking to regain his reputation after a sub-par performance, it is downright inexcusable. Fifteen months ago, Hatton was the toast of the boxing world. That was then, this is now. And now, all I want to see is if the "Hit Man" can back up that sizzle with a little more spice.