

An Exit Strategy or Early Retirement?

Written by Jesse K. Cox

Tuesday, 21 November 2006 19:00

Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to announce my retirement.

Two more columns and it's goodbye basement office, hello sandy beaches. Sure, I'm only 28, but you've got to admit I'm still the greatest writer you've ever read. Even if I haven't realized the true potential of my career.

Oh, I'll be bankrupt and racking up debt well beyond my wildest college credit card spending sprees in about a month. Things will work out for me. I'll live solely off my celebrity — if anybody even remembers me, or even heard of me.

If you don't believe in my plan, look at Jermain Taylor. Earlier this month he said he's calling it quits in August 2009. There's no "if I don't beat Joe Calzaghe" clause — of course, there may be fine print I've yet to read.

Floyd Mayweather Jr. shocked the post-fight press conference crowd with tears and his own plans to retire. He's 37-0 and only a year older than I am. He's out after fighting Oscar de la Hoya. Once again, his announcement may include an "if Oscar cleans my clock" clause.

Oscar has the same in mind, although he's been too busy to retire with all of his promotional work. He officially just retired from the ring Sept. 16 because that's the date he set before the Ricardo Mayorga fight.

I suppose the Pretty Boy-Golden Boy fight is kind of like an emeritus gig or something for ol' Oscar. Yep, that's it.

I personally wouldn't want to stick around too long. No need to stink up the place like a carp left on the living room floor for three days — that's a filthy college memory right there.

Evander Holyfield apparently doesn't know what how bad sun-baked fish in a common area smells — or even stains the carpet — or else he would have truly retired. The difference between Oscar and Evander is that Holyfield has been warned that his health is in serious danger if he continues.

Holyfield is a boxing great, but it's getting scary. Retirement shouldn't be just an option, it should be his next stop.

If that's not enough, look, or rather listen, to Thomas Hearn. I caught him on ESPN Classic's "Ringside." The 48-year-old Detroit native may have cracked Ray Leonard and scooped up multiple belts of varying divisions and sanctioning bodies, but it seemed the Hitman had become a too-many-times hit man. The Motor City Cobra's rugged career reduced him to the Motor City Mushmouth.

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I mean no cruelty to Hearn because he's produced a splendid career. I hope it's not too much to ask for a decipherable induction acceptance speech from Hearn when he's standing at the hall's podium in Canastota, N.Y.

John Ruiz finally gets it. The approach to have him simply leave on his own seemed a lost cause after his first retirement, which lasted just a little bit longer than his fights seemed to last. I'll be darned if James Toney's steroid test didn't turn up positive and present an open party invitation to the hug-happy man.

We all moved our sleeping bags to the other side of room. He just wouldn't leave. Almost every tactic was exhausted, including wrestling a Russian Bear, and he insisted on staying. If it weren't for Uzbek Ruslan Chagaev winning the decision last week, Ruiz would wake up with his underwear in the freezer and his hand in a glass of water.

What I like about Ruiz considering retirement is that he doesn't hold a belt. He went out on his shield, figuratively, when Nikolay Valuev, the aforementioned Russian Bear, won the WBA title from Ruiz last December.

New boxing rule: You don't punch out your time card until you've been punched out of a title.

I suppose that applies to Jermain Taylor and Mayweather Jr. Yes, they're moving up in weight and they necessarily have to leave their punches behind, they're certainly required to drop the belts at the door.

Vacant titles lead only to stiff and overrated promoters' pets getting the shot — most of the time, that is. Just think of it as if someone left the door open for Ford Motor Company and Al Davis to toss the Detroit Lions and Oakland Raiders into the Super Bowl this year. That's just bad football being passed off as a championship.

I'll assume my plan to vacate the keyboard bears a certain hypocrisy. That's why I've decided to extend my career for at least a few more columns until somebody tries to knock me out.

Bert Sugar once told me his plans for retirement.

"I'm getting paid to drink, smoke and bullsh--," he said. "If I retire, I'll probably drink, smoke and bullsh--. So, I might as well get paid while I can."

Excellent exit strategy, Bert.