

Ike Quartey: Does He Have The Wright Stuff?

Written by Evan Korn

Wednesday, 29 November 2006 19:00

The story of Ike Quartey's career is a simple one: always a bridesmaid, never a bride.

From the controversial decision defeats against Oscar De La Hoya and Vernon Forrest to the clear-cut decision loss to Fernando Vargas, Quartey has been stymied in his three biggest fights.

Despite impressive wins against the likes of Crisanto Espana, Vince Phillips and Oba Carr, Quartey has been stood up at the altar when the time to exchange vows on the biggest stages have presented themselves.

For Quartey, who took a nearly five-year break following the Vargas loss, the fact that he is even back in primetime is remarkable. After spending his "retirement" years partying hard in his native Ghana, the all-but-forgotten former Welterweight champion plotted his return.

We laughed.

We scoffed.

We said Ike would eventually be beaten to a pulp.

Before you could utter "Accra", the finest Ghanaian fighter since Azumah Nelson defeated top-10 Junior Middleweight contender Verno Phillips. A win over Carlos Bojorquez set the stage for his date to chop down one of the biggest trees in the Forrest.

On that summer evening nearly four months ago in New York City, Quartey won the night but not the fight. The sparse crowd chanted expletives following the announcement of the decision.

The real loser that night was the sport of boxing, not the 37-year-old "Bazooka." So when Winky Wright came looking for an opponent following a stalemate in negotiations for a rematch with Middleweight kingpin Jermain Taylor, Quartey emerged as the perfect foil: Big name and seemingly light years removed from being a top fighter.

Thus, most knowledgeable boxing people have given Quartey little chance of pulling off the upset, of coming up grand on the grandest of stages. But when all is said and done, does it really matter if Quartey wins?

Let's face it: Here is a guy who was a 1988 Olympian in Seoul, sharing the stage with the likes of Roy Jones Jr., Kennedy McKinney, Sven Ottke (formerly West Germany), Henry Maske (formerly East Germany), Riddick Bowe, Ray Mercer and Henry Akinwande (Great Britain).

All of the aforementioned boxers have had varied measures of success in the professional ranks. But Quartey, who now finds himself one win away from being a pound-for-pound entrant,

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has outlasted them all.

While many of his Olympic comrades in Seoul are either retired or should be retired, Quarley (who lost in the third round of the Light Welterweight competition to Australian and eventual Silver Medalist Grahame Cheney) is now, symbolically, a Gold Medalist from those games.

Win or lose against Wright, Quarley has already won. Come Saturday evening, maybe this bridesmaid will finally become a bride.

In a career marred by mega-fight letdowns, wouldn't it be something if the old dog finally learned a new trick?