

## Why The Comeback? McNeeley Explains

Written by Michael Woods  
Sunday, 19 August 2007 19:00

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Why bother? Why come back to this most dangerous game? I mean, it's not even a game, after all. There's nothing Candy Land or tiddlywinks about boxing. Peter McNeeley has taken enough blows in his time in the ring to know that.

But the alternatives, frankly, aren't there.

He has a criminal record, not exactly an attribute if he's looking to make something of his college degree, and latch on to a respectable firm.

He also has a considerable track record as someone who has struggled with substance abuse.

Again, not a resume builder.

So, the prospect of making some money is the primary motivator for the soon to be 39-year-old Massachusetts-based man, who is best known for taking on Mike Tyson in 1995.

Now, on the subject of this comeback, some of the feedback in our comments section has veered toward the sarcastic, and that's understandable. After all, the boxer did drop two straight in his last two outings, to Huggin' Henry Akinwande (KO2) and Mike Bernardo (TKO1). He didn't exactly exit on a high note.

But there's another factor involved in McNeeley's desire to have one more go in the arena. Two words: pitter patter.

Yes indeed, a Mini McNeeley will be entering this world in November, and there will be diapers to pay for.

"I slipped one past the goalie," the jovial McNeeley told TSS. "I'm not sure the sex. We have an ultrasound in September. She's hoping for a boy, I'm hoping for a happy, healthy baby."

Tanya is McNeeley's lady, and he says she's a straitlaced type, not prone to overindulging like him.

She works two or sometimes three jobs, he tells TSS, and he's hoping to get together some dough and making an honest woman of her sooner rather than later.

Does that soften your stance a bit, there, peanut gallery? The guy wants to fight to make ends meet, it's the oldest motivation in the book. We can all identify with that, can't we?

McNeeley sounds pumped up about the prospect of diaper duty, but knows full well that he cannot screw up again. He must, he knows, steer clear of the rock and the jug, or else.

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McNeeley has 70 days straight under his belt, he tells TSS. Depressed over not being able to get work, he fell into his old ways, but says he's been hitting AA meetings religiously.

Last year, there were two "jackpots" that resulted in a first for the fighter, jail time.

He was accused of rolling a bar patron in March 2006, and then three months later, McNeeley was accused of driving the getaway car in a convenience store stickup.

The first affair, he tells TSS, was a case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. He was in the vicinity when some n'er do wells rolled a highly buzzed patron at a local drinking establishment. He had nothing to do with the altercation, he says, but since he was there, the accuser fingered him. "Two punks who were talking to me beat him up," McNeeley says.

He did a quickie rehab stint right after but didn't see the light.

In June of last year, he pal came over and they started partying. The pal suggested going out for a pop. They drove, and hit a Walgreens for supplies. The pal made like he had a weapon and stuck up the cashier for about \$150. "I didn't know he did it," McNeeley says. They drove away and were stopped by three cop cruisers. The store clerk had taken down the make and model.

McNeley was dumped into a local house of corrections, where he spent two weeks as his family chose to let him cool his jets before bailing him out.

Week one was spent in segregation, he tells TSS, with a lone cellmate. He was let out of the cell for an hour a day. After a week, he went into general population.

No, he didn't get into any beefs with any baddies looking to get a notch on their badass belt.

"One big guy, a Haitian guy two cells away had a problem with me," he says. "Big Frizz they called him. He was big and scary looking. So I went up to him and I'm like, 'You don't like me?' Someone then told me, 'No, he's afraid of you, you're a boxer, he thought you might start hitting people.'

McNeeley laughs at the memory.

The man, I almost called him a kid, caught in the time machine of 1995, hasn't yet been broken down by his up and down arc of life. He still laughs, frequently, and believes that this time, he will stay straight. He's been to enough meetings to know the Big Book verbatim. Last summer, he did three months in detox/rehab after his jackpots, and is hoping that his impending duty as a daddy will give him an extra kick to steer clear of the rock and the demon rum.

Aside from the boxing re-entry, which McNeeley knows will be a short term kickstart financially, he's aiming to snag an apprenticeship as an iron worker, come January.

The boxing plan is this: "I know I lost my last two, so I need a quick win or two locally. Then I'll

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get a money fight somewhere else, maybe Riddick Bowe, or Evander. But I have to stay sober."

I told McNeeley that he has a lot of fans still, and that people worry about him. His speech, I told him, may not be as crisp and clear as it was.

"I was born with a speech problem," he says. "I saw a speech therapist since grade school. I didn't take much punishment in the ring, half my fights didn't go past the first round. That's low mileage. But the pipe was the worst for me. But I've been talking like I had a pack of marbles in my mouth since I was a boy."

Friends over at his condo, which was bought a few years back with leftover Tyson money, will ask him to pop in a highlight tape from 1995. He can notice, he says, that he doesn't sound as crisp. "Of course I do," he says.

Does it bum you out, watching the Leno and Letterman appearances? Splashing in the nostalgia pond bring you down?

No, he says: "I'm a man, I take responsibility and don't point at anybody but myself."

Apart from the wee one in Tanya's belly, and the need for cash, there is also a tug to test himself as an athlete, as well, so he doesn't look back, at 45, and wonder if he could've done more.

The little one, I asked him, will he or she put on the gloves?

"People ask me if I'll teach this kid to fight," he says. "It'll be the same way my father (Tom, who fought heavyweight champion Floyd Patterson in 1961) did to me. He never pushed boxing at me."

"But do I know the clock has passed me by? Yeah. But I have a small window. I don't want to look back at what might've been and then be drinking over it."

His family, he tells TSS, isn't enthused about the idea of getting in the ring again.

In fact, his mom and dad might read this piece and learn about the plan. He hasn't broken the news to them yet. "My brother Snubby's down with it, though," he says.

"I'll call my parents when I have my license in hand," he says. "And I'll explain. It's about the baby, and personal pride."