

INEVITABLE: Tyson/Holyfield III

Written by Ron Borges
Thursday, 12 June 2008 19:00

How long before the rumors start?

How long before some promoter with deep pockets or, more likely, some promoter with pockets that are inside out but who knows how to talk and how to tap dance, gives Evander Holyfield and Mike Tyson a call?

How long before he or she suggests Tyson-Holyfield III as a way to erase the debts that today seem to have both of them encircled in the kind of way only the IRS and mortgage holders can do?

Mike Tyson is presently the subject of a documentary that makes him look like the most forlorn figure in fisticuffs, a poor guy who didn't lose his way because he never knew the way in the first place.

He is broke, beaten down and bewildered by it all, except to repeat periodically that he's sorry he was a bad boy in addition to being a BAAADDDD MAN.

Evander Holyfield denied his mansion in Atlanta was being foreclosed on, even though that's kind of hard to argue when it was being offered for sale on July 1 by Washington Mutual, the holder of a \$10 million mortgage on the property. That forced sale has since been called off but no one is ready to say why, and the fact is Holyfield reportedly has three mortgages on the \$20 million property that total over \$15 million in debts.

He also claims one of the women who mothered one of his nine children is being unreasonable over the matter of \$3000 a month in child support that has been missing for a time. When you pay a reported \$45,000 a month in child support one can see how the check might have gotten lost in the paperwork.

Despite his protestations, Holyfield too seems broke, beaten down and bewildered by it all, except to repeat like a personal mantra that A) he isn't in any sort of financial trouble and B) one day he will again be unified heavyweight champion.

"I'm not broke," Holyfield told the Atlanta Constitution last week. "I'm just not liquid."

This is what it has come down to for the two highest grossing heavyweights in boxing history. Between them they grossed over \$1 billion in fight related income on pay-per-view alone with Tyson's gross at \$545 million and Holyfield's at \$543 million. Together they did the second most PPV buys in history at 1.99 million for the Tyson-Holyfield II Ear Bite Fight on June 28, 1997. Holyfield's purses exceeded \$240 million and Tyson's purses exceeded that.

While obviously neither took home all that money, the two of them made more than the gross national product of most countries, Holyfield himself earning \$34 million for the second Tyson

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fight alone. So how did they end up broke?

Bad luck? Bad judgment? Born under a bad sign? How about hard work?

Regardless of your circumstances you have to work pretty hard at it to blow that kind of money. That's true even if you have unscrupulous promoters, lousy managers, many marriages, too many kids and too few friends. Even with all of those problems blowing that kind of money without having waged war on a small nation is damn near impossible.

sp; Yet they did it, which gets us back to my original premise. How long before we start hearing rumblings of Tyson-Holyfield III? Not long because Holyfield has already brought up the subject himself, although there hasn't been much of a response yet from Tyson.

Would Vegas sanction it? You better believe it. Would some place like Dubai love to buy it to put that country on the map for something other than \$5 gasoline? For sure.

Are there any heartless promoters out there still willing to make a buck off the backs of two spent shells that are down on their luck? You want to start with the letter A and go through the list alphabetically?

Some purists might say, "These are two shot guys in their mid-40s. No way will anyone buy it." To that I say, "Trinidad vs. Jones." I say, "Jack Johnson on his back in the Havana sunshine. Joe Louis past his prime his head knocked into press row. Ray Robinson when all the sugar was gone, Ray Leonard when the story was the same. Duran against a lot of guys and Henry Armstrong too."

Exploitation at the end is the story of boxing and too often the person doing the exploiting is the fighter exploiting himself. There are reasons this is an old tune though, and it is the same reason Holyfield-Tyson III seems more likely every time they make a new headline, because the headlines they make now are about personal train wrecks, unpaid bills or lingering tax liens, not glorious chronicles of victory.

The news has not been good for Tyson or Holyfield for quite some time, but in the latter's case the bad news usually only involved another night in a ring, where his reflexes are gone and his performances substandard. For Tyson it was always worse. Legal hassles, back taxes, drug problems.

But now the headlines say Holyfield is broke too, a victim of a 109-room house no one could afford to keep up, too much child support, bad business deals and Lord knows what else. So why wouldn't he look to wipe out those problems the only way he has ever known?

Why wouldn't Evander Holyfield come back one last time to take on the man he beat twice before at a time when so many people believed he never could? Why wouldn't he come back to fight Tyson in an age-old rerun of old age fighters fighting over money not titles or even pride?

Given the chance, he would.

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Which brings us back to Mike Tyson. One of his long-time advisors said recently Tyson has no desire to train and will never come back again. The first half has been true for years. His desire to do the work required to win faded long ago, which is how he ended up on the floor against a less-than-journeyman named Kevin McBride in perhaps the biggest embarrassment of his professional career.

More to the point, the same man said Tyson wanted no part of Holyfield, who broke him down physically and mentally in their first fight and totally in their rematch, and perhaps he doesn't. But he may also soon tire of being the world's houseguest.

One can see why Mike Tyson wouldn't want to take a chance of being embarrassed for a third time by Holyfield. One can certainly see why he doesn't want to live the Spartan fighter's existence any more, even if it's only for six or eight weeks in training camp one last time. But the history of boxing also shows that if the numbers are right, or at least the fighters believe they are, a lot of other matters don't matter.

At the moment, Evander Holyfield has already brought up the subject. Mike Tyson has remained mum on the matter and no promoter has begun publicly beating the drum for Tyson-Holyfield III. Maybe things will stay that way, as they should for boxing's sake and their own.

Just don't bet on it.