

Tony Thompson, Heavyweight Champ of Blogging

Written by TSS Press
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Tony Thompson is counting down to his July 12, 2008 WBO/IBF mandatory unification title challenge against the champion Wladimir Klitschko. He's been keeping a diary leading up to the big day.

ENTRY #1:

"I've had great experiences in Hamburg in the past and this was no exception. I arrived in Hamburg on a Monday afternoon (May 28) with my manager Nate Peake after a full day of traveling from Washington, DC. Already being a little under the weather, I wanted to rest up from a very tiring trip, and be ready to face Klitschko face-to-face looking strong and healthy for the press conference the following morning.

But it seemed no matter how tiring of a trip it was, or how I didn't feel 100%, it was all overcome when I got that rush from knowing that I am going to be the next unified World Heavyweight Champion of the IBF and WBO on July 12th.

That thought immediately perked me up and got me mentally focused to be ready for the people of Hamburg. The one thing I thought would be funny was to wear my t-shirt that said, "I'm not a basketball player." Unfortunately, like my boxing shoes missing from my fight against Timor Ibragimov in 2007, so too was my "I'm not a basketball player" t-shirt I purchased the last time I was in Hamburg for the Krasniqi fight last year.

The people of Hamburg were still very warm, friendly, and inquisitive of whom this 6'5" giant was. What I didn't realize was how many fans I had just from my last fight in Germany and the anticipation of the upcoming fight. Many, many people came up to me and wanted to shake my hand and take pictures with me and requested many autographs.

After a quick dinner, which was really lunch for us (because of the time difference), I went to bed early, tired and jet lagged because I had to get up early for a busy day with morning interviews and a photo shoot and a noon press conference. I woke up at 10am that morning, which was really 4am back home.

After the photo shoot, I was on to my favorite part of the day, putting my custom made suit on knowing I was going to look great. My tailor from 'WE R ONE' made a stylish suit and of course my wife coordinated all of the accessories perfectly. I could've passed as secret agent 007 (James Bond) I looked so sharp. We were picked up from the hotel and rushed to the press conference where things got really interesting.

For a promotional piece German TV was doing, they wanted Dan (Goossen), Nate, and I to take a boat to the restaurant making a grand entrance into the press conference. Unfortunately, it was raining, which put a damper on the plans and not to mention our outfits. Klitschko and I were supposed to drive in on separate speedboats, however, the rain was coming down so hard

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they decided instead to have us come in on a tugboat, a real slow tugboat.

As network executives are prone to do, halfway there they changed plans and headed to the dock and put us on separate speedboats despite the pouring rain. They wanted me to pilot the speedboat, which was difficult because the rain was pouring down in my face, drenching my beautiful suit. They didn't seem to care. All they wanted was video of us coming in on the speedboats. Making matters worst, they had us coming in several times until they got what they thought was the perfect shot. I guess since Klitschko was as irritated as I was, I wasn't going to let it bother me. I actually had a great time talking and laughing with Dan and Nate about it for the next few days.

It was pretty cool seeing all the people waving to us in the surrounding buildings and warehouses, and pointing at me like they knew who I was.

When we entered into the restaurant my team and I were greeted by a tremendous amount of media members and fans. They took us to our table where they introduced us individually and let us say a few words then came the questions. There were very few words from me. My favorite part was when the press conference was over and we did the stare down. I noticed that Klitschko tried to intimidate me when it went from nice to serious. I wanted him to know that I wasn't going to be intimidated and this wasn't a fight he was going to win. He seemed to get my message because he softened his stance a little and became a little friendlier. After the staredown we were suppose to have dinner, but our next flight to the Ukraine was right after the press conference. So we had to leave, pack, and change out of our suits and go to the airport.

JUMP ON THE PLANE TO THE UKRAINE.

Two hours later we arrived in the Ukraine where they had more cameras and reporters to greet us upon our arrival. The Ukraine time difference added an extra hour to my already tired and jet lagged weary body. But I still had dinner with my promoter and manager before heading off to bed.

The next day I woke up for a breakfast interview at 10am, which is really 3am in the morning to me, so it was really hard to function properly. But I manned up and I got through the interviews even with some of the language barriers. The next press conference was right after breakfast. When we got there, I was introduced with the Rocky theme song entrance music, which was interesting because I really wanted to tell Klitschko "I must break you" but I didn't want to offend anyone so I kept that tidbit of humor to myself.

I've never seen so many television cameras and press photographers in my life. Dan said it reminded him of the type of coverage Mike Tyson used to get at his press conferences.

After another day and set of questions, it was time for my favorite part of the trip, the staredown. I was not going to be caught off guard so I took my glasses off and I got as close as I could to Klitschko. Somebody yelled out closer, so I moved in where we were standing nose to nose. I won the first mind battle because he backed up and I came forward in his face knowing neither one of us wanted to be the first to move or blink. It seemed like we stayed in that pose

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forever, until his brother Vitali broke it up and told us to save it for July 12th. After the press conference, we did a very uncommon and unusual thing, we went to a late lunch with Waldimir, Vitali (and his wife), Dan, Nate, and me, where we were met by a woman journalist who was writing a big piece on the fight and needed extensive time with Wladimir and me.

I was surprised I enjoyed eating Ukranian food. It certainly was different, but pretty good. By this time I was really getting tired of all the interviews. I really wanted to get the fight going after that intense stare down, but I answered the questions and I ate my food and Dan, Nate and me left. The next day we hopped on a plane and traveled all day long.

Now back in the states and into training that's it (smile) (laugh) lol till next report from training camp!"

ENTRY #2

Upon my return from Germany, I immediately started training in order to get in shape for my dream fight.

My manager (Nate Peake), Sharmba (Mitchell), Steve Francis and Brandy Hudson went to New Orleans, Louisiana to meet with Mackie Shilstone. He did a whole body assessment, to tell me how bad my body really is...not fun at all. He had me doing MRI's, seeing a heart and back specialist and a chiropractor.

The MRI was the worst. If you had an MRI you would know this is nerve wrecking. MRI is the most stressful thing in medicine. You go to see what's wrong with you and the test stresses you out. MRI looks like a hollow hot dog. You have to fit yourself in there, not an easy task for a big man like me. And the noise... err, err, err, so noisy for an hour long! They tell you not to move but how the hell you not going to move? And you know what happens, your nose begins to itch the second they tell you not to move.

Everything came out fine but the doctor threw a surprise on me. He did a prostate exam. I'm only 36! I'm thinking to myself, did Klitschko get to this doctor? I'm too young to have this exam without someone playing with me! He didn't even tell me he was going to do this, he's like "lean on your elbows" and I was caught by surprise. After the horror, I came back home to have a team meeting. In the team meeting we discussed where I was going to train for the fight. We really wanted to train in Washington DC, the location felt right and I really wanted it to be a part of the experience and accomplish this journey together. But unfortunately some 'big wigs' couldn't pull off the deal and we decided to move the camp to Vero Beach, Florida.

I left the wife and 7 kids back at home with the broken air conditioner, broken dishwasher, broken dryer and the electricity down in one half of the house. To me, this is God's sign that I better get this fight done. I have to get this fight done. But I am OK with leaving to train because I know my wife and kids are going to be OK. They know daddy is doing what he has to do to get this stuff fixed.

They had me a little barbecue party (I was only able to be there for about 2 hours) before

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having to leave to the airport. So I kissed the family so long and traveled to Florida the Sunday of Memorial Day weekend. Most of my other family members that were invited got there late, so they owe me some time spent together. My brother who is stationed in Japan, Army Sgt. Keith Thompson, dropped me off at the airport.

I traveled with Brandy Hudson and Tom Browner and we got to Vero Beach around 9:00 PM. When I arrived a couple of people thought that I was LeBron James. I wish I had that darn "I am not a basketball player" T-shirt on now.

Sharmba Mitchell was already in Florida and picked me and my team up at the airport.

For the next week we trained hard. Got on schedule and went to Buddy McGirt's gym. My back was sore so I had to see a masseuse. Come to find that I was being massaged by Hitler... or should I say Dr. Kevorkian. He left me worse than I had started so now I am back to my number 1 rule... never let a man massage you, only a woman. Can't wait to see my regular masseuse Jamie from Florida. Looking forward to a real massage. Stop laughing!

After that I had to travel back to Washington for my sister's wedding. The day before the wedding and hours before I boarded the plane, I get a call from US Airways informing me that my flight had been canceled and that I would have to make "alternative arrangements." After hollering for a while they were able to put me on a flight that departed earlier. Little did I know that they had me in a center seat where the passenger next to me decided to rest his tray table on my knees. About an hour and a half before the flight landed I decided to stand and stretch my legs for the remainder of the flight (or at least until they asked me to sit down). I stood in the stewardess section and people seemed kind of nervous as if I was guarding the restroom.

The next day (the wedding day) I barely made it to the church on time because there was a storm. There was zero visibility and to top it off the storm was so bad that the electricity in the church went out. There were no lights, no air conditioning and no music (seemed like I was back at home). Now we had to improvise. Luckily the RTL German camera crew were there filming me and we used their camera lights when it came time for the priest to read. Finally, my brother and me gave our older sister away because both of my parents are deceased.

I flew out the next Sunday night. However because of a faulty toilet and the storm, I was sitting in a center seat again for an hour and a half on the runway. These airlines are quickly putting me in the mood to get my hands around Klitschko's neck. If this keeps up I may not be able to restrain myself until July 12.

I waited until Monday to resume working out and it was back to work again. On Tuesday, I worried about Wednesday. Why? Because the TV people don't have me in a speedboat this time, they thought of something crazier, but at least on dry land but unfortunately a little bit scarier.

Wednesday they've got me working with real life tigers and I know they are going to eat me. You know how it goes, they are well trained, then they return to their wild instincts and attack.

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Animals do attack.

Wednesday will forever be known as the day of the tiger in my mind.

Wednesday, I started with my normal sparring session; it was predictable, as I took my lumps in the Florida sun (LOL).

It was also the day of the Tiger shoot with RTL TV from Germany. After we finished sparring, I had to recharge my battery by getting a little rest and do my best of not thinking of how nice this tiger was going to treat me.

Animals do attack.

I then hopped on my first helicopter ride, which was pretty interesting and scary. A lot of you may ask why? Everybody that knows me understands that flying is not one of my favorite things. Especially something as small as a helicopter where you feel every bit of the wind whipping against the chopper.

Before I got on the helicopter the pilot gave me a few instructions. One rule in particular stuck in my mind. The pilot said never walk towards the back of the helicopter because people have been known to lose a limb or two. So this did a lot to help my confidence for getting on this helicopter.

Since RTL was also flying in the helicopter, I had to sit in the back seat scrunched up as if I was in the middle of the coach section on a plane. You can imagine how I felt like a sardine. Surprisingly, once the helicopter took off I had the time of my life. Man it was it was crazy. It was better than I could have ever imagined.

At 500 feet, it was incredible to see the top of Orlando and the rest Florida from that height. You would be surprised to see how many wild animals and sstuff you see running around loose. Because I am kind of a nature nerd it was cool for me. After an hour ride in the helicopter and dodging a bus fire below, we landed at the tiger compound. This is where it really gets interesting.

I was excited and anxious at the same time, because I have a soft spot in my heart for big cats, especially tigers. I was also kind of fearful because some of the things that I was about to do with the tiger. I was nervous and fearful baby!! Some of the things they wanted to do were walk the tiger on a leash, feed the tiger by hand (by hand!!!), wash the tiger with a hose and kneel down beside the tiger while rubbing him on his back (I was thinking more like begging him for his forgiveness not to eat me). This was a tall order.

I thought it was pretty interesting because when I fed the tiger I only fed him the legs and thighs of the chicken, that's right, all the dark meat. And he seemed to really enjoy it. I didn't know if I should bring out the deep fryer or if I should be worried because I was the only dark person there (LOL).

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Never was I calm, even when the tiger was behind the cage and I was feeding him. I fed a 600-pound tiger name CHAD. Somehow I thought the name just did not fit very well. So, I immediately changed his name to Sampson. However, let me explain by saying, no disrespect to all the CHADS out there, but I thought a tiger this magnificent deserved a magnificent name.

I fed Sampson a chicken leg at the top of the cage and when he stood fully extended, he was over 7 feet tall. Baby he was big!! Shaq and Yao Ming have nothing on my new friend Sampson.

It was a magnificent but very scary site. It made me feel justified in my kids choosing the name of the Tiger for me because the tiger is majestic, he is intimidating, he is ferocious and more importantly, Sampson was just plain beautiful. Beautiful like me, baby!

When I first got to the tiger compound, I was a little hesitant because I do not like to see ANIMALS HELD CAPTIVE. However, the tigers were in such wonderful shape and I have to commend the guy that ran the compound for the way he kept his place, the way the animals were treated as well as the condition of the animals. Unfortunately, I do not remember the name of the guy who ran the compound but after this fight, I am definitely going to take my kids there. However, they will not do all the things I did with tiger but they will definitely get to see all the animals.

It's real funny that German TV has shown more interest in introducing me to their public than our own TV networks in the US. To me that's really unfortunate because most of our TV networks think of me as an afterthought when it comes to this fight. Nevertheless, this just adds more motivation for me and I am not bitter at all. I am just determined BABY!! So after all the excitement on Wednesday it was back to work on Thursday.

Brother, back to work it was. It started off pretty bad for me because I was exhausted from all the tiger stuff and posing for pictures. It was good to get the PR stuff over with and get back to the grind of winning the heavyweight world championship.

Let me describe Buddy's gym for those who don't know. For anybody that has ever been to Florida, you know it is an understatement to say that it's freaking hot down here. Even though Buddy has a great gym, it's pretty much a warehouse with no fan, no air condition and no ventilation. If its 90 degrees outside, then it is about 115 inside at 9 a.m., when I train. Therefore, without having my proper rest with the heat beating down on me, I was dog-tired after sparring and not much in the mood for continuing anything else. But they (trainers) did not have any mercy on me, as they pushed me through the rest of my workout, which good trainers are supposed to do. So I was very tired but satisfied with the quality of my workout. I was also looking damn forward to my day off from sparring on Friday.

We worked very hard Friday. My trainers again did a great job of pushing me through the hard work and the heat. Barry Hunter, Tom Browning and BB Hudson, they make a great team knowing my body and the right things to do to get me through my workouts. Having the Headbangers family down here was a plus as well.

That's about it, I guess I will catch you people a little later, time for bed now. I got to run in the

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early morning.