Most of you have probably heard the story now, that Ricky Hatton cried when former heavyweight champ Muhammad Ali showed up at his gym in the UK last week. According to those who were there Hatton was blown away after shaking hands and exchanging pleasantries with the most famous fighter/boxer in fistic history. Ali is much bigger than boxing and it's almost a miscarriage of justice to think of or limit him to just being a boxer. Muhammad Ali is no doubt one of the most recognized persons of the 20th Century.

After posing for pictures outside and then inside of Hatton's gym, Ricky presented Ali with a cake which had the word "GOAT," which stands for "Greatest Of All Time," inscribed on top of it.

"I've been fortunate to meet some of the greatest stars of boxing during my career, but I'd never had the chance to meet the greatest of all," Hatton said.

"He's not just the greatest boxer of all time, he's one of the greatest men of all time."

"Even youngsters know Muhammad Ali. And I think his gift of the gab has made the entertainment side of boxing what it is today."

Everything Hatton said is true. It's also true that everything that could be said about Muhammad Ali in one form or another has already been said since the night of February 25, 1964 when he won the heavyweight title from undisputed champ Sonny Liston in his 20th fight as a pro.

Ali is currently visiting the UK and being celebrated for the three times he fought there during the sixties. He stopped Henry Cooper (5th round TKO) in his first fight there before meeting Liston in his next bout. Three years later he stopped Cooper again (6th round TKO) to make his fourth successful defense of the title. Three months after that Ali defended his title for the fifth time, against Brian London (3rd round KO), at the Earls Court Arena in London.

Through the years boxing aficionados have vigorously debated and questioned what was the best fight of Ali's career and when was he at his physical peak. In regards to Ali's prime, I don't think he really had one. The best version of Ali physically was the one who was gaining weight as he toured the country speaking on college campuses during his forced exile. When he came back in October of 1970, he never really adjusted to his slightly more filled out body and was sometimes caught between styles. In some bouts he seemed to force himself to move because that's what he thought he should do, and other times he looked more content to trade and fight a more physical style seizing on his newly discovered physical strength.

Ali's fight with Cleveland "Big Cat" Williams is often mentioned as the fight where he combined speed and punching power the best and more so than in any other fight of his 61 bout career. Everybody has their own views on that and it's something that's pure conjecture. That said, if Ali ever combined speed and power more so than he did during the first five rounds of his first fight against "Smokin" Joe Frazier in 1971, I'm not sure I've seen the fight in which that occurred.

Most Ali fans would probably agree that one of the best single punches Ali ever landed was the left-hook he nailed Oscar Bonavena with on the chin in the 15th round, which for all intent and purposes ended the fight. It was also the only time Bonavena was ever stopped in his 68 bout career. Had that been the first time you ever saw Ali fight, you'd come away thinking his left hook was his bread and butter punch.

Ali is the only fighter to ever stop George Foreman and was the first to stop Ron Lyle. He's also the first to drop Chuck Wepner, something neither George Foreman or Sonny Liston could do. And neither could Joe Frazier do it while sparring Wepner several times during a 2/3 year period. During his career Muhammad Ali faced better opposition than any other heavyweight champ in history. He posted wins and went 5-1 versus three certifiable all-time greats in Sonny Liston, Joe Frazier and George Foreman.

One more thing. On August 6th 1966, Ali knocked out Brian London in the third round to retain the heavyweight title. After feeling London out for the first two rounds, Ali backed him into a corner midway through the third and unloaded a barrage of punches so fast it's virtually impossible to count them. Ali was hitting London so fast that his punches actually prevented him from going down for a couple of seconds. Never have I seen a fighter at any weight cut loose with a barrage of punches so fast on an opponent. Making it even more impressive is the fact that most of the punches Ali threw were straight lefts and rights, as opposed to them being hooks and uppercuts which have less distance to travel and are easier to get off in succession.

The fastest hands to grace boxing, period, were the two Muhammad Ali unleashed on Brian London that stopped him in the third round of their heavyweight championship bout at the Earls Court Arena in the UK. As great as Ali looked against Cleveland Williams, the greatest combination he ever threw came in his fight versus London three months earlier.

It very well could be the greatest and most impressive combination thrown by any fighter, at any time.

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