Written by Ron Borges
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LAS VEGAS – Floyd Mayweather, Jr. better hope his timing is better Saturday night than it was on Tuesday afternoon.

Four days before the undefeated former pound-for-pound champion is scheduled to end his self-imposed 21-month exile from boxing by taking on lightweight champion Juan Manuel Marquez at an inflated 144 pounds, Mayweather went off on one of those rants that leave you wondering how a guy who gets hit so infrequently can have such head problems.

Normally, one dismisses what Mayweather says in the lead up to a fight, settling instead for simply enjoying his mastery of the science of boxing and leaving it at that. But this time it seemed he must not have noticed that these are tough times in America.

This is not the best of times to be whining about the difficulties of your multi-million dollar lifestyle, even if the IRS and at least one bank are chasing you for what they claim you owe them. You got grievances with the world? Take a number, Floyd.

Ben Bernanke may be insisting this week that the recession is over but try selling that to the 10 per cent of the population that has been unemployed for many months with no prospects of that changing any time soon. For them this is no recession. It's a depression and has been for a year or more.

That is what made Mayweather's comments during a round table discussion with a circle of fight writers following a rather tepid press conference called to hype the affair at the MGM Grand all the more distasteful. At times Mayweather's pre-fight ravings amuse. Other times they are simply irksome. But most of the time you at least leave feeling there's a method in his madness. This time you just left thinking it was madness.

Mayweather has long lamented how he is viewed by the American boxing public, which these days is a far smaller circle than it once was. He feels underappreciated even though, based on ticket sales when he's the A side of a fight as he will be Saturday night, he's quite often been over paid for what he's produced on his own at the gate or on pay-per-view.

Long jealous of the popularity of Oscar De La Hoya, which he has never approached even though he ultimately defeated De La Hoya in the ring, Mayweather went off yesterday, arguing that he has never received his due from the public and the media not because fight fans find his defensive, counter punching style boring but simply because of his race and America's on-going problems of racism. One would assume from that he's never heard of Sugar Ray Leonard, who seemed to overcome these problems just fine.

"I wouldn't change my life for nothing in the world,'' he said. "There's nothing like being young, black and rich but there are certain things you think about. If Floyd Mayweather was white, I'd be the biggest athlete in America. The biggest! The biggest! I know that for a fact.

“One thing you never hear. You never hear anything negative about Oscar De La Hoya. Anything he do negative, it gets swept under the rug.

"If you're rich, you're a rich n-----. If you're poor, you're a poor n----. If you're smart, you're a smart n-----. At the end of the day, they still look at me as a n-----. This country needs to be more positive."

Mayweather was at right about the latter but apparently he didn’t feel it applied to his own commentary, which veered from his take on race relations in America to how he feels more loved in Great Britain than he does in the States.

“We’re already at war,’’ Mayweather said. “We're in a recession, we're at war and we continue to be negative. The fans in the UK showed me more love than in my own country. That's crazy ... Sometimes I'll sit back, I'll be in my (home) theater sometimes, and I'll think: 'Imagine if I was the same fighter that I am, and I was the same person that I am, and I was from another country.’ Can you just imagine how big I'd be?”

This is not the best time to be asking the American people for sympathy when you’re making millions of dollars and sitting in your home theatre pondering how much bigger you would be if you’re theatre was in Switzerland at a time when most people can’t even afford to go to the theatre on the corner. You want to voice those problems and you won’t be very big at all. You’ll be dismissed as what he sounded like yesterday, which was either someone badly detached from reality or someone who needs a hug.

Mayweather then compounded that rant when he ripped into HBO broadcaster Larry Merchant and Hall of Fame trainer and boxing analyst Emanuel Steward, dismissing the former as ill-informed and the latter as, well, a lot worse than that. How this would encourage anyone to buy their broadcast of Saturday’s fight is beyond me but Mayweather at least cannot be accused of promoting his fights in the traditional manner.

In fact, some might argue he wasn’t promoting yesterday at all. He was fomenting and not exactly in a way likely to attract new fans to his corner.

"Larry Merchant don't know nothing about boxing," the former and maybe future pound-for-pound champion said. "What's that other guy's name [at HBO]? [Emanuel Steward]. He's an Uncle Tom. One thing you can't knock. You cannot knock my talent."

Who was?