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In Part One, the styles of Joe Frazier and Larry Holmes were analyzed and broken down. In this final part the similar styles of Larry Holmes and Muhammad Ali will be compared and contrasted to determine who individually matches up better fighting Frazier. Also, TSS examines a possible scenario how a Frazier-Holmes bout might have turned out had they fought during their prime.

The Ali Factor As It Pertains To Holmes Fighting Frazier

Comparing the boxing/fighting style of Larry Holmes and Muhammad Ali has been done numerous times since Holmes became a ranked contender. The question here isn't who would've won between them, it's which one had more of what's needed as a fighter to beat Joe Frazier?

Although their styles were similar, they weren't clones. Neither liked fighting inside, but when forced to Holmes relied on his right uppercut and Ali leaned more on his left-hook. Holmes would sometimes try to fight his way out if cornered or forced to the ropes, Ali was prone to hold or flurry in spots to escape. Holmes was susceptible to being nailed with a right hand, Ali was vulnerable to a left-hook. As stated earlier, if Holmes couldn't keep Frazier from getting inside, he's just as vulnerable to Joe's left hook as Ali.

Their left jab was their best punch. The post exile version of Ali's was faster, if only by a morsel, and he threw more. Holmes' jab was harder and straighter. That said, Ali's had more variation. He could change its direction up or down after he released it, something that makes his jab more effective versus a moving target like Frazier.

Holmes is thought to have had the harder right hand, but it's close. As to who was the better puncher, they're in the same class. Holmes may be a couple seats closer to the front of it than Ali, but it's the same class. To state it any other way is wrong.

Both were significantly stronger than they ever get credit for being. When it comes to strength that's applicable to fighting in the ring, Ali had a slight advantage. I'm not saying he'd beat Holmes if they arm wrestled, but when it came to tying up another fighter or holding him and pushing him off, Ali was one of the best. Once he put his hands on his opponent, he made them cease what they were doing.

It's hard to say with impunity who had the greater stamina. Both always had a third and fourth wind when they needed it. The difference being Holmes stayed in better shape than the post-exile Ali when they weren't fighting. Too close to call.

Having a dependable chin as a last line of defense is a must when taking on Joe Frazier. Holmes took a great punch. How many heavyweights get up from the right hand Earnie Shavers dropped him with in the seventh round of their title bout? That said, if there ever was a punch that rivaled the right Shavers dropped Holmes with, it's the left-hook Frazier dropped Ali with in

the 15th round of their first fight, and he got up from the grave before taking a count.

The biggest difference in their ability to take a punch as I see it is, Ali showed he not only could take one hellacious bomb, but he could take them in succession. Holmes got up from a few shots heard around the world, but he was never cracked again with a finishing blow to the degree Ali was. And that's because Ali fought better fighters throughout his career than Holmes did. If forced to pick who took the better punch, it's Ali. However, it might be better said between these two, "if any fighter had a more proven chin than Holmes, it was Ali."

Ali was more versatile on his legs. He could fight on his toes circling right or left and change direction better than Holmes could. That said, his legs only carried him out of harm's way in 10 of the 41 rounds he fought against Frazier. The bottom line here is neither could've kept Frazier off fighting on their toes.

Holmes clearly had the better basics and was fundamentally a better boxer than Ali. He also punched to the body, Ali seldom did. That said, Holmes' body punching would've been nullified by Joe's build and style of coming in low. And if there's anything that can break down a fighter's fundamentals, it's constant pressure.

One of Ali's most effective punches against Frazier was the right lead, a punch Holmes threw as often as Ali went to the body. Throwing it, especially at a moving target, leaves the fighter open. But Ali's quick hands allowed him to get away with it. Landing the punch bought Ali extra time and briefly disrupted Frazier's rhythm and aggression.

In an accumulation of small advantages, I believe Muhammad Ali has a marginable advantage over Larry Holmes fighting Joe Frazier.

Why Frazier Would've Beat Holmes

In the ring as a fighter, Frazier did everything in the book to make Holmes' life as Ali said, "the closest thing to dying." There's no hypothetical regarding whether Frazier could've handled Holmes' style, it's an open book. He showed against every mover/boxer he fought, speed and movement weren't an obstacle for him. He also showed that he could get inside a fast left jab and nullify it. No, Buster Mathis and Jimmy Ellis weren't Larry Holmes, but Ali was and as stated above matches up better against Frazier. In reality no fighter was tougher and knew how to fight Ali better than Joe Frazier did. There's three fights and 41 rounds of documented boxing history as undeniable proof. It's no secret to any boxing observer that Holmes never faced a fighter with Frazier's style, let alone stamina, aggression and determination. The unanswered questions only pertain to one fighter in this one, Larry Holmes.

When matching two all-time greats from different eras, the fairest way to do it is to match them at their best. The best Joe Frazier was the one who defeated Muhammad Ali on March 8th 1971, the best Larry Holmes beat Gerry Cooney on June 11th 1982.

Had they fought, Holmes would've looked terrific winning the first two rounds, possibly shaking Frazier once or twice during them. He also would've expended more energy in those two rounds

than any other two he ever fought. Somewhere before the end of the third round Frazier's pressure would start getting to Holmes allowing him to get inside. By the midpoint of a 15-round fight, Holmes would be reduced to a walk, fighting in spurts. As the rounds progressed his jab would be less frequent and would have lost some sting. He'd really have to load up on the right to keep Frazier from walking through it, which would've taken a lot out of him.

After 10 rounds Frazier would be in control, with Larry trying to survive more than fighting to win. While Holmes is fighting to last, Frazier would be on top of him like no fighter he ever fought, looking to end it with every punch. In a great fight Holmes would've had his moments, but that wouldn't have been enough to best Frazier. This is in no way a slight to Holmes who was/is one of the top-five all-time great heavyweight champs, but Frazier because of all that has been outlined would've won a unanimous decision over Holmes or possibly stopped him late.

Holmes no doubt matches up better with the likes of Louis, Liston and Foreman better than Frazier does, but Joe matches up great with Larry. Joe Frazier not only had the perfect style to beat Larry Holmes, he had it down pat. That's why he would've defeated him if both were at their best.

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