Roy Jones Jr.'s story ended the way they usually do in boxing. It ended sadly.

Flat on his back less than two minutes into the first round of a fight Wednesday night a hemisphere away from home, the 40-year-old Jones looked stunned as he lay on the floor looking up at a guy named Danny Green. He bore the look they all wear at the end: "How'd I end up here?''

Once Roy Jones was the most respected name in boxing, a fighter much of the world insisted was one of the best boxers in history. While many old-timers would forcefully dispute that, there's no question he was one of the best of his generation even though he was technically deeply flawed and seldom seemed interested in challenging himself against boxing's leading challengers.

That is why it was not until this week that he first fought overseas, agreeing to fight the little-known IBO cruiserweight champion in Sydney, Australia. He went there because, frankly, nobody much wants to pay to see him fight in the States anymore.

That's been proven time after time in recent years both on pay-per-view and at the gate. Once he was a draw. Today he's just another old fighter who stayed too long at a very violent dance. He's a tenor who can't carry a tune anymore but keeps singing in the back of the cabaret.

When Jones pulled himself off the canvas, he spent what is hopefully the final minute or so of his boxing career with both hands wrapped around his ears, resembling a school kid being overwhelmed by a bully on the playground. He never fought back, instead just lying against the ropes and being pummeled by a less-than-effective Green until referee Howard Foster finally stopped it at 2:02 of that first round of hopefully Jones' last fight.

The 36-year-old Green was supposed to be a tune-up for Jones, preparation for a rematch with Bernard Hopkins that should have happened 17 years ago but never did in large part because Jones didn't want it to. That was always his M.O. in the old days. Back when he could fight he didn't want to. Now he can't and he just won't leave the arena.

It was once written about a once surly but now genial but washed up old ballplayer that "he only learned to say hello when it was time to say goodbye.'' Hello, Roy Jones, Jr.

Jones is 5-5 since 2004 and has been knocked out three times. He's lost every fight against a truly competitive opponent since the night he beat John Ruiz to win the WBA heavyweight title, his wins coming against guys more washed up than he is like Felix Trinidad and Jeff Lacy or against guys who never were. Joe Calzaghe left him bloodied and badly beaten. Antonio Tarver and Glen Johnson knocked him stiff. Now it is the 36-year-old Green, who frankly isn't even in the same discussion with Tarver and Johnson, two guys who wouldn't have been in the discussion with Jones a few years ago.

"I feel almost bad doing that to someone whom I aspired to look up to as a professional fighter inside and outside the ring,'' the seemingly embarrassed Green (28-3) said after the fight.

He shouldn't. Jones got what he asked for. He got embarrassed because, as usual, he wouldn't listen to anyone, including his long-time trainer and friend, Alton Merkerson.

That embarrassment was his fate certainly seems justified because Jones embarrassed many over-matched opponents when he was at the height of his powers. Few fighters of such high stature treated opponents as lowly as he often did, seeming to revel in making a fool out of journeymen while steadfastly avoiding guys like the long undefeated Dariusz Michalczewski or Hopkins, whom Jones beat by decision in a lack luster affair on May 22, 1993 at RFK Stadium in Washington for the then vacant IBF middleweight title.

Frankly that night both guys stunk, each having far too much respect for the other to turn things into a fight. It was an affair that cried out for a better ending and for years after Hopkins chased Jones but never could get him back in the ring. That was Jones, more elusive and illusory than the kind of fighter you fall in love with.

He may have been the best of his generation but he didn't make good fights and he never seemed to want to know how good he really was in the way great champions like Muhammad Ali, Sugar Ray Robinson, Sugar Ray Leonard, Marvin Hagler and all the greatest boxers did. Had he been around when Hagler was you can count on one thing – Jones never would have gotten in the ring with him.

Jones was a businessman more than a boxer, a guy who took fights against every form of municipal employee and called them title fights because HBO let him get away with it.

He fought a cop, a teacher, a mailman, a garbage truck driver. There was probably a cabbie or a bus driver in there too but memory fades. This week so did Jones, a process that has been ongoing since Antonio Tarver first knocked him cold.

Jones was always technically flawed but his physical gifts were such that it didn't matter. He could carry his left hand by his kneecap and get away with it because of his speed, balance, hand-and-eye coordination, agility and the fact he was always in shape, which was one thing he should be admired for.

Ali was the same way but Ali also was blessed with an iron jaw so when his flaws began to show he was still able to triumph over them by his willingness to absorb punishment, as in his last fight with Joe Frazier in Manila. Jones wanted no part of that kind of fight but when his skills began to slip he wasn't so lucky as Ali. When he began to get hit by punches he used to slip, he fell down.

It happened again in Australia in a packed arena but so far away you have to look on YouTube to see it. If you were ever a fan of Roy Jones Jr. do yourself a favor and don't bother. Who wants to be sad before Christmas?

His left hand slung way too low as always, Jones got caught retreating, which he's done a lot of in recent years. Green's right hand shot over his low-slung left and clipped him behind the ear and he went down like he was a piece of china someone knocked off the table. He didn't fall so much as collapse, tipping over on his shoulder on the canvas before righting himself and then pulling himself up with blind resolve, all the fight in him left on the floor.

From that moment on, Roy Jones Jr. was buffeted from pillar to post. Green was so lacking in skills that he never fully took advantage of the situation but that was actually good because regardless of what you think of Jones or how he arrogantly conducted himself most of his career it would have been a shame if it ended with him lying at the feet of Danny Green.

If nothing else he avoided that fate and, perhaps fittingly, something else as well. With that loss Roy Jones Jr. did what he'd been doing for 17 years. He avoided Bernard Hopkins once again. Considering how long he ducked him, maybe that was how it should have ended for him.