

## TSS Where Are They Now? Harry Arroyo

Written by Shawn Murphy  
Monday, 10 May 2010 15:00

---

Harry Arroyo fought out of Youngstown, Ohio and was one of the fans favorites on television in the mid 1980s. Arroyo won 23 straight fights as a pro before beating Charlie Choo Choo Brown for the IBF lightweight title in September 1984. His title reign would last just under a year, as Jimmy Paul decisioned him in April 1985. It was always Arroyos dream to fight fellow Youngstown native Ray Boom Boom Mancini, but the fight never materialized. Arroyo says its his biggest regret of his career. Arroyo retired in 1993 with a final record of 40-11.

SM: Harry what was life like growing up in Youngstown and how did you get your start in boxing?

HA: I had 15 siblings, I made 16, so I always had to fight for my part of the dinner (laughs). Yes, we had a large family. I remember my mom and 2 sisters being pregnant at the same time. I remember getting into a fight when I was a kid, maybe 12 years old. A guy who saw the fight said I could probably be a good boxer. I went home and told my brother about the fight and he took me along with him to the gym. He was a pretty good boxer at the time.

SM: So how did your amateur career go?

HA: I had a great amateur career. I fought for 7 years as an amateur. I won the Youngstown tournament all 7 years with the exception of the finals one of those years. I also won the Cleveland regional 6 times and went to the nationals 12 times. The nationals were held twice yearly back then. I also made it to the Olympic trials in 1980 but lost in the quarter-finals to Johnny Bumphus. I started in the golden gloves at 14. You were supposed to be 16 but they never made you give them a birth certificate back then. So basically I had to lie for 2 years.

SM: Turning pro how far did you really believe you could go?

HA: You know Shawn, every fighter dreams of that final dream. I fantasized every time I saw Alexis Arguello and Sugar Ray Leonard fight. I would go to the gym and try to throw some of the combinations they threw. I just had so many great champs back then that I was able to copy off of.

SM: Who was your first big fight?

HA: Definitely Robin Blake. He was ranked in the top 5 at the time. Actually it was me and Robin Blake to determine who would get a title shot.

SM: Tell me about that title win against Charlie Brown.

HA: It was really exciting. Charlie (Choo Choo, from Philly) had a personality that was really something. But I was never one to be intimidated. I was always calm about everything. Charlie came up and got into my face and tried to intimidate me. I just smiled and winked at him. I think

## TSS Where Are They Now? Harry Arroyo

Written by Shawn Murphy  
Monday, 10 May 2010 15:00

---

that took away some of his spirit.

SM: Your first title defense was against another Charlie Brown (White Lightning, from Illinois)?

HA: Yeah strange, same name but no relation. It was an exciting fight and he really came at me. He actually won the first couple rounds but I was able to start countering him and finished him in the 8th.

SM: You were behind in your next title defense too before a TKO werent you?

HA: Yes, against Terrence Alli. One had me even and one had me behind a point. He was for sure one of my toughest fights.

SM: What happened in the Jimmy Paul fight when you lost the title?

HA: Well you know, I really don't know what to say. If I would have fought to my ability I would have beaten him.

SM: Were you prepared?

HA: Oh yeah, I was in great shape. In the last round I gave it all I had, tried to put pressure on him and it just wasn't enough. His style of fighting I just wasn't prepared for. I was training for a left-hander because I was going to give Robin Blake a fight. Then he pulled out and Jimmy Paul came in. I had less than a week to prepare for a right-hander. If I had better handlers behind me the fight would have been cancelled altogether.

SM: After that fight you went just 14-11 before you hung it up. Did that fight take everything out of you?

HA: I think the fight that took everything out of me was the Alli fight. We went toe to toe for 14 rounds (actually 11 according to Boxrec) and it took a lot out of me. I was at a point when I lost to Jimmy Paul that I was taking a vacation basically and getting paid for it. I looked at it as a vacation instead of a fight.

SM: What were purses like back then?

HA: Once again I didn't really have good people to negotiate for me. We basically took whatever was offered. Anytime Mancini fought he was probably offered \$200,000 at minimum, all the way up to \$700,000 or so. Back then when I was offered \$200,000 I thought I was the richest man in the country. I came from a large family and my dad did the best he could. We had just enough. Purses back then were a lot of money to me.

SM: Ah yes, tell me about Ray Mancini and the fight that was never made.

HA: There was no contract signed, it was all verbal and I agreed to fight him. I think he was

## TSS Where Are They Now? Harry Arroyo

Written by Shawn Murphy  
Monday, 10 May 2010 15:00

---

definitely ducking me. The reason for that was because Ray and I trained together when we first turned pro and had the same trainer in the amateurs. The trainer would tell me to take it easy on Ray because I used to beat him up every day. Ray was so easy to beat that I didnt feel I was getting anything out of it. I think that was subconsciously drilled into his head and thats why he wouldnt

fight me. There were rumors that he stated that he would never let another Youngstowner beat him. They still talk about what if that fight was made. I don't understand why they thought Ray was such a great fighter. Because to me he was just an average fighter and if he would have fought a lot of the guys I fought he would have got beat. I told him we could have fought for a million dollars; now it would be in a bar for free.

SM: Any fighters you would have liked to fight besides Ray?

HA: Sure, Bobby Chacon and a lot of the fighters Ray fought. Livingstone Bramble is another. Alexis Arguello too. Not to say that I would have beat Alexis but it would have been a real honor just to say I fought him. Its just a crying shame what happened to him.

SM: How does your era compare to today, in regards to level of competition?

HA: Back then you have boxers, sluggers and fighters. Today you have showmen. Its a lot of talk and flash and showboating. Its a real change from back in the day. I don't think they should have changed fights from 15 rounds to 12 rounds. I just dont think it made a huge difference in safety. Those 3 rounds were championship rounds.

SM: After boxing what did you do?

HA: I wouldn't say I became a Jesus freak or anything but I became very spiritual. I got married and had 5 kids. I still go to the gym and spar but just with beginners or older guys who are coming to the gym to get in shape. I don't go in there to be a sparring partner either.

SM: Regrets about your career?

HA: I had a good trainer, but management now as compared to back then is different. I had local management and I think if I had got a well-known manager I might have done better. I dont have like nightmares about it, but I really did want to fight Ray Mancini. I was talking to a guy one day who I guess you would say is a Mancini freak. We were talking and I was kind of downgrading Ray. The guy told me that I wouldn't say that if Ray was here. It was funny because at that same time Ray walked in. This guy looked at Ray and told him what I had said. I told Ray that I would have beaten him every single time we fought. I used some choice words that I won't repeat. Ray just shook his head and told me to get the heck out of here, in choice words as well.

SM: Final words Harry?

## TSS Where Are They Now? Harry Arroyo

Written by Shawn Murphy  
Monday, 10 May 2010 15:00

---

HA: I just appreciate everyone remembering the past and its a good feeling when people still remember me. Back then we had the Leonards, Hearn, Haglers, Alis and Fraziers. It was a fantastic era. If Ray wanted to box now I would gladly have a show. Im 52 and Ray is 5 years younger than me and Im old as dirt but I still think I could handle him.

SM: I would still like to see that fight. Thanks for speaking with me.

HA: Thank you Shawn, its been a real pleasure.

Note: Please support Shawns favorite charity at [www.retiredboxers.org](http://www.retiredboxers.org).