

Fortune favors the brave.

~ Virgil

Henny Youngman, “The King of the One-Liners,” also happened to be a serious boxing fan. He’s cracked his last joke, though the laughs roll on. As the Mayweather–Mosley drama recedes into history, one can almost see the comic standing at a celestial microphone: *A gunfighter walks into a bank*

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...The bank is celebrated for its high tech security; in fact, no man with guns has ever walked out of it with anything more than a red face and empty hands. But this gunfighter is touted as someone special, someone known for his experience in knocking over other establishments. He manages to dent the vault and it gives a little, at one point even buckling under the weight of a blast. Then something remarkable happens ...*the bank shoots back.*

Indeed, it was the offense, not the defense, of Floyd “Money” Mayweather that disarmed Shane Mosley. Forget the rest of the explanations. There is only one reason that Shane did not capitalize on the positive proof that he could hurt Floyd: He got convinced that Floyd could hurt *him*

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It was assumed that Shane was the puncher here, and it was taken for granted that he would be the bigger and stronger man. In the second round, Shane financed that notion with thirteen power punches –two of which almost blew up the bank. But the bank survived and the assumptions blew up as the world watched Floyd bully Shane for the rest of the night. It was almost like watching Alan Greenspan loosen his tie and execute a clean and jerk.

Shane landed only one power punch in the third and none in the fourth. Floyd not only threw more total punches than Shane, but doubled, trebled, and quintupled Shane’s connect rate in rounds three through twelve. The gunfighter was gun-shy. What happened? A well-conditioned veteran is not gun-shy unless he is concerned about being hit and he would not be concerned about being hit unless the offending shots have power to hurt him. At the post-fight press conference, Nazeem Richardson was asked what adjustment Floyd made in the third round after being on the brink of a KO in the second. Nazeem, who had accurately predicted that a dragon would rise up out of Floyd in this fight, said “that fireball hit us.”

For his part, Floyd casually remarked that he could have been the first man to stop Shane had he so pleased. No one laughed.

There was no trace of the alleged injuries, the pot shots, the pay-per-view performances that were as exciting as watching a boy with a stick chase a leaf in the wind. Floyd’s critics are silenced. Even boxing’s version of the GOP, those ‘Grizzled Old Purists’, must concede that

Floyd

Written by Springs Toledo
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Floyd Mayweather is a complete fighter. They can gnash their teeth on stogies and growl at his measly 41 fight record, but the fair-minded among them know great when they see it. And Floyd is great.

How great?

The answer is a paradox in two parts:

FLOYD MAYWEATHER IS NOT AS GREAT AS HE CLAIMS

Leonard Ellerbe is Floyd's advisor. He should position himself strategically at his interviews and stand at the ready. When Floyd begins to declare his superiority to Sugar Ray Robinson, Ellerbe should pull the plug on the microphone, or stick him with a tack.

The numbers don't lie. Robinson had already faced and defeated three Hall of Famers a total of five times when he reached 40-0. He was only 21 years old. At no less than a dozen years older, Mayweather has 40 wins and one gift. When Robinson was 33 years old, he had been in the professional ring over three times as often as Floyd and had by then defeated eight Hall of Famers seventeen times. His record was 131-3-2 with 86 knockouts. Read it again and watch Floyd shrink. In his determination to convince the world of his primacy, Floyd would do well to avoid comparisons between himself and the fistic deities of the past. The reason is simple: even the best of bronze looks dull next to polished gold.

If Ellerbe lacks the nerve to straighten him out, then self-proclaimed boxing historian Uncle Roger should take his nephew aside for some honest talk.

FLOYD MAYWEATHER IS GREATER THAN HE BELIEVES

After nearly five years of campaigning in the welterweight division, Floyd has finally accomplished what another Sugar did almost thirty years ago –he defeated a particularly dangerous rival.

There are interesting parallels between the personalities of Ray Leonard and Floyd Mayweather. Both double as savvy, image-conscious celebrities who have a strain of what seems to be insecurity. It is detectable if you look closely.

Neither has been above seeking advantages before a fight. In the rematch against Roberto Duran, Leonard admitted that he intentionally lured him back into the ring only five months after their first bout because he knew Duran's gluttony would affect his conditioning. Leonard tried to ignore Thomas Hearns until public pressure reached fever pitch and forced him to the table. He also managed to get several concessions against Marvin Hagler –including a larger ring, bigger gloves, and fewer rounds. Floyd's choices of opponents over the past three years suggest a similar pattern. These patterns suggest insecurity.

Neither have had many fights. Boxing is a means to an end for them, not an end in and of itself. What Leonard craved was the limelight. Impressive wins as a young Olympian and professional made him a superstar but he was either retiring or ready to retire after a tough battle or a big win. For Floyd, those c-notes he flashes are only emblems of the grandiose self-image he has

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built, and his glory is rooted in his undefeated record. Whether he responds to critics of his record with fallacious argument or acknowledges their right to an opinion is beside the point. The details really don't matter a whit to him; the address for Floyd National Bank is just as good on Easy Street as it would be on Concussion Ave or Pain Lane.

He just cleaned the clock of an elite welterweight; but what is being suggested here is that had he, in the silence of his solitude and in his heart of hearts, truly believed in himself, he'd have already cleaned out the whole division.

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'Floyd is not as great as he claims, but he is greater than he believes.' That statement is not slinging mud so much as pointing to the stars. Important decisions must be made by this special athlete. He should feel encouraged, now more than ever, to seek high-risk bouts. The returns are of the forever type. If he chooses instead to sit on a single laurel and insist, as he has lately, that "all roads lead to Floyd," then his legacy will be about as solvent as a Greek bank.

Time is of essence. His style pivots off of speed and reflexes –which also happen to be the first casualties of Time the Destroyer. Banks dissolve. Skills do too. With that sickle at his back, will Floyd Mayweather fight his way into immortality before it's too late?

The gods of war are watching.

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The graphic is the work of Jason McMann of Plymouth, MA.

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