

Im 43 years old and havent had an official fight in more than nine years and, yet, I still have never actually stated anywhere that I am retired. Ive never brought myself to utter the words. My first organized boxing match came in the spring of 1980 and my last was an exhibition in Montreal back in October of 2002. Ive been training professional boxers since the beginning of 2001. Thats what I do. But I still consider myself more of a boxer than a trainer. As a matter of fact, I often refer to myself not as a trainer of boxers but as a boxer who trains boxers.

Ive never even tasted a drop of alcohol in my entire life, never smoked a cigarette and certainly have never fallen back through hard times (or good times for that matter) on any types of illegal drugs. I loved the fact that I was a boxer. I felt that it set me apart from the other 99 percent of the rest of the human population on earth. To this day whenever I find myself doing some roadwork, usually a 5.3 mile run through my town, I always recall the words that I first uttered in 2003 when I was still attempting desperately to organize fights for myself through contacts with various promoters and matchmakers:

Ive never felt more alive than when I was fighting or training for a fight.

I dont fight for a living anymore and have no plans to do so ever again. For the record, I am retired from the game.

Now with the news that former world champion Ricky Hatton was caught on film ingesting cocaine many have contemplated what it must be like for a man to suddenly find himself living without the thrill of the sport that he participated in for so many years of his life. Does the sudden absence of that life contribute in some way to these men finding themselves seeking out other ways to experience such an amazing level of euphoria? Are they trying to match and replace the thrill of thousands cheering their name as they walk the aisle to the ring? Trying to replace the joy in hearing their fans wildly applaud them after another victory?

Or is it just another case of a man simply falling into drug abuse, a man who just coincidentally also used to be a high profile athlete?

Now I am not in any way at all comparing my accomplishments or visibility to that of a Ricky Hatton or a Joe Calzaghe. They were world champions and super stars on another level of course. But whether you are as accomplished as an elite superstar or as largely unknown as a local pug making a few dollars here and there on undercards, in my opinion, the thrill of it all and the feelings a fighter feels deep inside of himself are basically the same. And, believe me, its no easy thing to give up. You go to bed and wake up night after night and day after day with the knowledge that you are doing something that only a relative handful of people on the entire planet are able to do. It becomes your identity.

When you walk down the street or through the aisles at a local store or you stop to buy gas, someone is bound to point you out and say, There goes the boxer. Not There goes Bob. You

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become whatever your first name is again after all is said and done. But while its going on, youre the boxer. Period.

You run the streets doing your roadwork and numerous people beep their horns at you and yell encouragement out their window. They know you and they know why you are running, too. Seeing you on a regular basis running their streets, they have a connection with you, like theyre part of your career. They probably even tell people how they saw you running that morning. You feel like you stand out more than you did at any time in your life. Youre the boxer.

I know for me that was the hardest part to deal with. Not being the boxer anymore.

Maybe thats why to this day I still spar as frequently as I can. Maybe its why I sparred more rounds (711) in the year 2009 than I did in any other year since I began boxing in 1980. Maybe its why whenever I am in a gym and there are guys in or around my weight getting ready to do a round-robin sparring session I suddenly feel anxious and eager. I dont want to watch this. I want to participate!!

It is most likely why on the night my boxer (May 6, 2006) Jose Antonio Rivera won the WBA 154 pound world title I was very happy for him, excited to be a part of it all. So proud to be considered an integral part of the accomplishment. But at the same time I found part of me wishing it was me and not him standing there with Jimmy Lennon announcing my name as the new world champion.

I cant speak for Ricky or Joe Calzaghe on whether either of them feels as though they need to replace one high with another, a natural one with an artificial one. No idea what is going on in their heads. But I can speak for myself and, who knows? Maybe its solid advice they can put to good use. Its certainly not too late.

Each of them has experienced the ultimate high that we all strive for, that being the winning of a championship of the world. I accepted long ago that I wouldnt be a world champion just as these two must accept that their championship days are now complete. And in my opinion it is almost their duty to do as I have and pass their obtained knowledge and experiences on to those who try to follow them. Where would any of us be, those two included, without the guiding forces of experience that first led us down our fistic paths?

Ive been in the gym for almost thirty years now as a boxer, trainer and fan and have put my time in with countless boxers, from four year old kids to thirty something year old champions of the world. And while I would like to think -and I do assume- that if boxing were to be abolished here and now today I would still never fall victim to any sort of attempt to fill the void on my life with something artificial. But at the same time, I wouldnt ever want to test it out either. Everything boxing gave me to me and more, I am giving back now. Ive successfully moved on to the natural next phase and I plan to be here until my name is etched in stone in a grassy field somewhere.

I sincerely hope guys like Ricky and Joe, champions with a lot more to give than unnecessary and unflattering headlines shouting out their unfulfilling post boxing lives, decide to join me.

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EDITOR NOTE: Scully is working on an autobiography, The Iceman Diaries, in every spare second.