

TSS Where Are They Now? Milton McCrory

Written by Shawn Murphy
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Milton McCrory, a former WBC welterweight champion, fought out of the legendary Kronk boxing gym in Detroit. The Iceman, as he was known, had a 105-15 record as an amateur. Turning pro in 1980 under trainer Emanuel Steward, McCrory ran off twenty victories before meeting Colin Jones in 1983 for the vacant WBC welterweight title. The bout ended in a draw and McCrory would win the rematch five months later.

After several title defenses he ran into Donald Curry in 1985. McCrory (35-4-1 with 25 KOs) was no match for Curry and lost his title via a knockout in round two. He would lose one last world title bout in 1987 against WBA World light middleweight champ Mike McCallum and retired in 1991.

SM: Milton its great to speak with you. What have you been up to since you retired from the ring?

MM: Well I worked for Chrysler for about fifteen years. I just retired last year.

SM: What about boxing, have you been involved in anyway over the years?

MM: I trained some amateurs from about 2001-2004. Guys like Andy Lee and Domonique Dolton. Whoever was at Kronk, that's the only place Ive helped out. I just dont have the time for it too much because Im married and have other things going on right now. I still go to Kronk quite a bit though.

SM: So how did it all start for you, boxing?

MM: I was about twelve years old. Jimmy Paul got me started in it. We were little kids and Jimmy told me he was boxing and I didnt believe him. Duane Thomas said the same thing. It was winter time and there was nothing else to do so me and my brother Stevie decided to go check them out and see if they were lying. They tricked us and told us that if we came down to the gym we had to bring shorts and shoes and we would have to box too. We said ok, went down to the gym and never stopped boxing.

SM: So what was the highlight of your amateur career?

MM: I would say winning an amateur championship in December 1979 in Japan. I fought a lot of guys in the amateurs that were a lot older and experienced. I was told as an amateur that I was just being used for a sparring partner and wouldnt go anywhere. I really didnt want to stick around for the 1984 Olympics so I turned pro at eighteen. The amateurs played a big part of my life. I was way ahead of my time. I look back now and realize I made the right choice to turn pro so early.

SM: As a pro who was your first real test?

MM: Randy Shields, and then Pete Ranzany. Pete was the first to take me ten rounds, he was tough. My whole thing was to knock everybody out. Pete told me at the weigh-in I wasnt going to knock him out. During the fight I was throwing some real punches but he never went down. He made me piss blood. I thought that his punches werent doing anything to me but after the

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fight I pissed blood.

SM: You had two tough fights with Colin Jones. Why was he so difficult?

MM: Because of his style. Styles make fights. I never wanted to fight a guy like Marlon Starling who held their hands up over their head. That's why it was difficult for me against Jones. The first fight I really punched myself out after the eighth round. I just didn't know how good a fighter he really was. He had more experience than me. I sparred with guys at Kronk like Hearn, Hilmer Kenty and Caveman Lee. I did 50/50 or so with them so I thought I had the edge on most fighters. And that's what I thought going in against Jones, but he had the edge in experience.

SM: What was your feeling on the draw in the first fight?

MM: To be honest I thought I won the first fight, that I should have got the decision. The only difference in the second fight was that I knocked him down. He never hurt me in the first fight but he did in the second, about the seventh round.

SM: When did your troubles with your right hand start?

MM: You know I was supposed to fight on the first Leonard-Hearn undercard. I hurt my hand before that in a fight. I won the fight but I cracked some bones in my right hand. When I went to Vegas to start training they cancelled my bout because of it.

SM: Did the hand affect your future bouts?

MM: Not really. Emanuel took me and Tommy to a hand specialist in California in 1982. He shot something in my hand and it worked. But after that I never really had the confidence in my right hand that I did before.

SM: After several title defenses you ran into Donald Curry. Were you 100% for that one?

MM: Not really. Making the weight just killed me. I went from like 172 to 147 for the fight. Donald Curry was a very good fighter, but the weight just killed me.

SM: What about the Mike McCallum fight?

MM: I wasn't 100% for that one either. I had about two weeks notice. I found out my nose was broke my first week of training in Arizona. I was bleeding early in that fight. I took the fight because I really thought I could beat Mike, even on short notice.

SM: After the McCallum fight you fought only six times in the next four years. Why so few?

MM: In 1987 I fought Herman Cavasuela, defending my NABF title. About the fourth or fifth round I knew I was going to stop him soon. He hit me with two left hooks and I went down. I remember thinking earlier in the fight that the guy couldn't really punch. I got up, came back and won the fight. I think that was a sign from God. This guy couldn't punch and I went down. I fought Lupe Aquino after that and got dropped a couple times and lost a split decision. I just wasn't what I used to be. After the Robert Curry fight in 1991 I hung it up. It was really my kids. They were six and nine at the time and I missed my kids, wanted to be around more. You know I won an amateur world championship, a professional world championship and I had reached all my goals. I realized I was just chasing what I had already had, so I just quit.

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SM: Was there ever any talk of you fighting the big dogs, like Duran, Leonard, and Hagler?

MM: Duran and Pipino Cuevas turned me down. They talked about a Leonard fight after he beat Kevin Howard. They were giving me 1.5 million for it but it never materialized. Emanuel told Leonard later that he knew Milton would have beat him. You know I would always whip Tommy pretty hard in sparring and thats why I think I would have beat Leonard. Everything back then was Sugar Ray this and Sugar Ray that. Duran turned me down because after he fought Tommy he didn't want to fight any tall fighters again.

SM: Any regrets looking back on your career?

MM: Taking the fight with McCallum on two weeks notice with a broken nose was bad and I regret that. I should have moved up to middleweight around the time I fought Curry because I had outgrown my weight by then. Starving to make welterweight was real stupid.

SM: You keep up on boxing today?

MM: Yes, Im a fighter so I do quite a bit. I guess really Im an athlete. Im watching football right now. Ive been watching sports all my life. I always wanted to be a professional baseball player. I never dreamed boxing would turn out like it did for me. You know growing up in the 60s and 70s, that was a way out of the neighborhood for black folks.

SM: Whats in the future for you Milton?

MM: I dont really know what the future holds. I guess I would like to maybe get back into boxing. I think I could show people a whole lot about the mental discipline. Today its really different. Look at the welterweights today like Mayweather. These guys are too little. Guys like Mayweather, Pacquiao, even Sugar Shane Mosley are too small. I remember not eating a real meal for three weeks back then just to make weight. It was just a different era; its just hard to compare us to todays guys.

SM: Milton last question, where did your nickname Iceman come from?

MM: Most of my early fights were knockouts. Me and my old trainer Walter Smith were driving on a trip somewhere and he asked me if I ever heard of a ring announcer or a radio guy named Iceman? After a few minutes he told me Man you have really been icing those guys lately. By then I had like five first round knockouts and from then on the name just stuck.

SM: Milton it was a pleasure to speak with you, best of luck.

MM: Thanks Shawn, take care.