Let me make it clear right up front, in my opinion George Foreman of 1973-74 is one of the three or four greatest heavyweight champions in boxing history. Foreman's destruction of undefeated heavyweight champ Joe Frazier is the most awesome exhibition of punching power, and brute strength I have ever seen in the ring. Had Foreman not lost to Muhammad Ali in October of 1974, there's no telling how long he could have reigned champion.

Other than Ali, the only other past greats who I could see beating Foreman at his best are Jim Jeffries and Joe Louis. I don't want to hear that Jimmy Young beat him, or that Young was a slick boxer and that's why he beat Foreman. Young didn't fight the same Foreman that Frazier and Ali did in 1973-74! The Foreman of 1977, the year he fought Young, was no where close to being the same fighter of 1973-74!

Anyone who closely followed his career back then either knows this or just flat-out ignores the fact that Foreman wasn't the same fighter after Ali. Foreman at his best, (1973-74) would have gone through Jimmy Young in three rounds. Foreman's supposed lack of stamina never would have been an issue. Young would not have been around long enough to see Foreman tire. Some say Ali showed Foreman was vulnerable to a good boxer. What is often overlooked is that Ali had to endure monumental punishment before he could go on the offensive against Foreman. No other heavyweight boxer in history could have stood up to the punishment Foreman inflicted on Ali to be around long enough to box him.

Foreman also showed in his comeback that he was a man among men, not to mention that he won the title from the man who beat the man at age 45. He also showed that in his forties, the best fighter of this generation, Holyfield, could only out speed and out score him. Foreman withstood a prime Holyfield's assault better than Mike Tyson did under an eroded Holyfield's assault, despite getting hit with more hard and clean punches. Foreman of 1973-74 goes through Holyfield and Lewis, and he mutilates Tyson. I know that will infuriate some, but that's what I wholeheartedly believe. And I've looked at it from every possible angle, and could never be swayed to see it differently. If you don't see it that way and think one of them, or all three of them, could have beaten the Foreman who fought Frazier and Ali, then we'll just have to agree to disagree.

Now that I have paid my respects to Foreman the fighter, it's time to rebuke the man/commentator. Foreman amazes me sometimes. Never have I ever heard a color man make so many ridiculous comments during a fight, and then in the next sentence say something absolutely brilliant. The funny thing regarding Foreman is that he does the color providing the strategy for each fighter to follow. This comes from a fighter of whom Richard Pryor once commented, "George has a unique boxing style, none! Which one the referee, cause I'm gonna kill the other mother F'r". What strategy and game plan did Foreman ever follow, especially in his first career in the late 60's and 70's?

Foreman said something after the Chris Byrd-Fres Oquendo fight that really irked me. When

Jim Lampley turned to Foreman and asked for his final thoughts on the fight, Foreman said that Byrd should be a man and admit that he lost. Then, he used the Joe Louis-Jersey Joe Walcott first fight as an example. He said that Louis left the ring before the decision was announced because he thought he lost. Excuse me! How about George Foreman practicing what he preaches?

First of all, Byrd admitted to Larry Merchant that he thought the fight could easily have gone to Oquendo. Has George Foreman ever done that? No! He said that Byrd should tell it like it is. Well, what about him? Does he tell it like it is? Did he say anything close to that after he fought Alex Stewart, a fight most observers felt he lost? No! Did he say anything close to that after he fought Axel Schulz, another fight most observers thought he lost? Hell No!

How dare George Foreman scold Chris Byrd for not saying he lost a fight for which he was awarded the decision. It's funny how Foreman says that HBO has the best boxing judges that money can..., and then he stops and says HBO has the best judges. Of course he was insinuating that the decision was bought by Don King. If my memory serves me correctly, I don't recall him saying anything about any decisions being bought and paid for when he was the perceived benefactor.

However, what I do remember is Foreman making every excuse in the world after he was stopped by Ali. First, it was that he was the victim of a quick count, which is beyond absurd. Then it was that Bundini Brown had his food poisoned. After that it was that the ropes were loosened by Angelo Dundee and Bobby Goodman. It took him ten years to finally admit that Ali won fair and square and was the better fighter that night. And this was in a fight in which he was counted out, not a disputed decision. Ten years to admit defeat?

Yet he's got the gall to admonish Chris Byrd for not saying that he lost to Oquendo? Byrd said that it could have easily gone the other way. I'd say that's standing up more than Foreman ever did after winning a decision that some felt could have gone the other way. Hey George, we all see through your agenda, try practicing what you preach!