

## TRASH TALK..by A Woman Who Loves Boxing

Written by A Woman Who Loves Boxing  
Friday, 27 January 2012 14:22

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*Mayorga (r) talks trash a wee bit better than he fights. (Hogan)*

We all heard it as small children: “Sticks and stones will break your bones, but words will never harm you”. But anyone who has been verbally abused, whether it was at home or on the playground, knows this isn’t true. The bite of a slap often goes away more quickly than the sting of a word. Our minds bruise just as easily as our bodies.

Trash talking is a sports staple. It is used to gain, with varying degrees of success, psychological advantage over an opponent. Boxers are the kings of trash talk. Since the days of Jack Johnson many boxers have used their mouths in tandem with their fists. It is as much a part of the sport as swift feet and hard punches.

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Muhammad Ali was seen to have perfected the art of trash talking early in his heavyweight ascendancy. When he rhymed predictions as to when he would knock out his overmatched opponents, and then fulfilled the predictions in the ring, it was done with insight, forethought and humor. It was part of his persona. There was a time when he was as famous for that as he was for his skill as a competitor. At that point (when he was still Cassius Clay), his talk was more about his own ability and confidence and then backing it up with his performance in the ring. Only later did he tarnish these gestures by going overboard in the cruelty of some of his remarks.

Trash talking can be confidence building if the person saying it believes his own words. It can be comical, as if to cut the tension of the threat that looms over a boxer every time he goes into the ring. It can be used to exploit any small insecurity in one's opponent. And of course, it is great for media ratings. Boxing fans, like football fans and hockey fans, are all about the big hit. A loud trash talking sound bite can resonate just as widely as a knockout punch, sometimes more so.

There are boxers like Ricardo Mayorga who are more famous for their pre-fight rants than for their in-ring success. If Mayorga had been speaking English when he was asserting that he would smoke cigarettes in the ring to celebrate his victories or that, after he beat Oscar De La Hoya, he would demand that Oscar come to Managua and clean up his backyard, he would have placed boxing on SportsCenter night after night. It was hysterical stuff, and fans knew not to take it seriously. However humorous this might have been (especially because he did not back it up with results in the ring) we all, including the media, should have stopped listening once he spouted his disgusting homophobic remarks, called the reputation of his opponent's wives into question, and promised to send them home to their mothers in body bags.

Where, if anywhere, do we draw the line?

Today's boxers trash talk too often on subjects that are outside the realm of the sport. Am I the only one who finds it offensive when non-sport topics such as family, legal situations, lifestyle, sexual orientation, and especially racial slurs are used for media hype? Am I the only one who thinks it is ridiculous when pre-fight press conferences turn physical? What is it about boxing that makes it all right for Floyd Mayweather, Jr., a king of pre-fight hype, to put his hands around Victor Ortiz's neck or get into a shoving match with Shane Mosley?

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An even more disturbing question is what happens to a fighter like Andre Ward, the newly crowned 168 pound Super Six champion, who values his integrity, and whose refusal to take part in the banter seem to prevent him from gaining popularity and the monetary success that goes with it? Does Ward need to learn to be more of a jerk to amplify his stardom? Boxing champions such as Joe Louis, Sugar Ray Robinson and Rocky Marciano did not need trash talk to have legendary careers. They set examples that Lennox Lewis and the Klitschko brothers have followed. But in the glare of today's media and using any tool available to bring attention to themselves, does someone like Ward have a chance to stand out and remain dignified?

In recent years, and particularly in the wake of Joe Frazier's recent passing, boxing reporters have taken a second, more objective look at Ali's trash talking. In the colder light of forty years later, his taunting of Frazier's less sophisticated mindset and his use of terms like "Uncle Tom" and "gorilla" are seen, not as lighthearted and playful, but as insensitive and unwarrantedly salacious. To some degree, this has diminished Ali's perceived boxing sainthood. And frankly, anything which diminishes Ali at this point diminishes boxing.

I understand and even admire the bravado and necessity of trash talk. No matter how good a boxer's skills are or how long he trained, it requires confidence to be a winner. But I truly believe that trash talk should be about the "sticks and stones." It devalues boxing as a sport if the ugly words are about race, sexuality, and family.

[Comment on this article](#)

### **Radam G says:**

Actually, Editor Mike, "trash talk" came in with -- not GOAT Muhammad Ali but -- Queenberry rules first heavyweight champion of the world John L Sullivan, who mastered it. You should read up on him. It is sad that "race and sexuality" have found their ways into the game, but everything else is on the table, including family. It is like playing the "dozens."

Also, Editor Mike, insiders know how the game is played and are supposed to be immuned to being hurt by the game's accepted words and ways. [You are taught this in training. IT is like baseballer Jackie Robinson was taught to be strong about racist words shouted to him, while breaking into the "white league.">

Also sometimes those in the media go melodrama and spit a lighted match fire as a forrest fire. Once again, trash talk -- in boksing, we call it "talkin' smack" -- is just as much a part of the game as a jab, hook, uppercut and cross. Banding, or politically correcting it, is just taking more and more away from the game like the dumbarse referees are doing with clinching, especially "behind the head." What should stop is the media reporting of this -- to many sensitive people --

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terrible part of the game. Boxing is war. The media limit their reporting of the psy-ops of war. They should do the same for the sport war of boxing. Do some BEEP, BEEP, BEEP stuff!

But again, "race and sexuality" are done by the WEAK, WEAK, WEAK, and these weak \_\_\_\_, like always, eventually get their arses torched. Serve 'em right. Holla!

### **Radam G says:**

Not truth about Joe Louis, Sugar Ray Robinson and Rocky Marciano, Editor Mike. They did not do this in public. [That was the way of the times then.] But by the boxing grapevines, back rooms and back roads, it was naturally done BIG TIME. And Sugar Ray Robinson even had Drew "Bundini" Brown doing it with him BIG TIME the same way Bundini did it media publicly with the young Cassius Clay/GOAT Muhammad Ali.

As I've said: The game is all about optical illusions. Magic is everywhere. And until you know how the trick is done, you don't know and cannot see how the magic is done. Holla!

### **MisterLee says:**

Nice article! Tss rules!

### **ultimoshogun says:**

I don't mind trash talking, but I do agree there are certain lines that shouldn't be crossed. I'm pretty biased when it comes to trash talking...I guess it depends on the delivery or who its coming from. Guys like Ali and Mayorga made me laugh...but when it was Roy Jones or Floyd Mayweather it bugged me for some reason. During the 90's I loved watching Deion Sanders hold up the ball and high step into the endzone and follow up with that Hammer dance, but I hated when Michael Irvin was doin the trash talking and beating his chest. Same with the Fab Five at Michigan, I loved the swagger and trash talking they brought on the court but if it were someone like Duke I would've hated it.

### **TotoyBato says:**

MMA, UFC has gone mainstream. UFC targets 18-35 demographic. In a very short time Boxing (boxing what?) will be forgotten. Ask an eleven year old who's the best, chances are he'll say Anderson Silva. When I was eleven I would have said Mike Tyson. Wake Up!!!! How's that for trash talk.