A little less than a year ago, William Joppy told me he would retire from boxing. At the time, his face swollen grotesquely courtesy of a 12-round beating from Bernard Hopkins that had ended barely an hour before, and it was disfigured to the point where I was uncomfortable looking him in the eye.

His manager at the time, Steve Nelson, told me the next day that he would give Joppy a few months, then they would talk about coming back, maybe making a run at a middleweight title were Hopkins to leave the division.

At the time, I thought Joppy was done. Saturday night, after Jermain Taylor dominated him, I wished he had been done. This is a guy who, despite all his peculiarities, was genuinely likeable, and I would have preferred he went out better.

As Frank Lotierzo pointed out at TheSweetScience.com a few days ago, Taylor was in a no-win situation; if he beats Joppy easily, he knocked out a shot fighter; if he loses, he wasn't worth the hype.

But Joppy was in a similarly bad situation—overmatched, fighting an opponent he did not care about, essentially only for the money. What would beating Taylor have gotten him? A top contender slot? Another beating by Trinidad and/or Hopkins?

If Joppy had stayed retired after the Hopkins loss, he would have gone out under less than ideal circumstances, but still on his terms—and having won the ludicrous $50,000 side bet with Hopkins by avoiding a knockout. He held a middleweight belt for nearly five years, saw a good bit of the world, and lost to a pair of Hall of Famers giving vintage performances in Hopkins and Felix Trinidad. (His only other loss, a close decision to Julio Cesar Green in 1997, was avenged a few months later with a dominating decision victory).

Instead, he did what he once emphatically told me he would never do: sell his name to a rising star. It's easy to understand why he did it—it is very difficult to turn down a presumably six-figure payday. But when I read his pre-fight press conference quotes, and saw his crotch-grabbing antics, I began to believe that Joppy was doing this as much to convince himself as everyone else. I don't think his heart is in it, and that's no way to end a respectable career.

His heart wasn't in anything but fighting Hopkins in the years after he lost to Trinidad, though he often talked of Tito's handwraps. He turned down far easier fights than Hopkins—against Joe Calzaghe, Robert Allen and others—that would have paid a lot more than Don King's lowball purse bid for the Hopkins fight.

I'm not worried about his physical health. It's his right to fight, and if he's physically able (which he obviously is), then obviously there's no reason to stop him. And this is one guy, recent legal

troubles aside, that I had always presumed would be fine financially.

He didn't get rid of his window-washing business until well after he became the middleweight champion. I don't think he's ever bought a new car in his life.

He was always hustling something. The first time we met, he tried to sell me a pair of jeans, something like a size 36, clearly too big for me.

He replied that they'd shrink in the wash, and that he'd drop the price from $15 to $10. I declined, as I did over the next two years, whenever he had hats, gloves, mittens or anything else for sale.

But the turbulent year since the Hopkins fights—two arrests, the charges since dropped—and his decision to finally vacate D.C. for his adopted hometown of Winslow, in southern New Jersey seemed to give Joppy enough closure to end his career, to get away from the craziness that seemed to follow him in Washington gyms.

Joppy, to me, is the perfect example of a good-but-not great fighter. He's not a Hall of Famer like Hopkins, but not a nobody either. I had hoped he would transition smoothly into life out of boxing, paddling around his New Jersey home, doing enough real estate deals to keep him from ever washing windows again. I guess he still can.