

“Grandpa versus the Fat Guy.”

Written by Rick Folstad

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Just when you thought it was safe to tell the guys at work you're a diehard boxing fan, someone comes up with a new rendition of the Gong Show, has-beens and never-weres trying to dance their way into your heart and home.

In a fight they've been threatening us with for two years, Eric “Butterbean” Esch will face Larry “This is my last fight, honest” Holmes in a 10-round sideshow on July 27 in Norfolk, Va.

It should be billed as “Grandpa versus the Fat Guy.”

Maybe you remember Holmes. He was heavyweight champion of the world during the Reagan Administration. He made his pro debut when Nixon was still president, the same year Secretariat won the Triple Crown. He's 52, or the age when most of us start eating soft food.

“Some things are worth coming out of retirement for,” Holmes was quoted as saying. “This is to get rid of some of the gaudiness and honky-tonk from the sport.”

Huh?

And you thought Mike Tyson was crazy.

“Many people said this fight would never take place,” said promoter Daryl DeCroix, obviously referring to those people who broke out in hysterical laughter when they heard who was fighting. “We've worked hard to bring these fighters together.”

Why?

If you look hard enough, I guess there is a place for this fight. It's called Celebrity Boxing. Esch and Holmes should be able to squeeze in somewhere between the Pee Wee Herman - Ronald McDonald extravaganza and the long-anticipated match between RuPaul and Gary Coleman.

“We realize this isn't Tyson-Lewis,” DeCroix said at a recent press conference. “What we're trying to bring is a great night of boxing and a great night of entertainment.”

C'mon, Daryl. It might be entertaining in a Hulkamania, pony and dog sort of way, but it won't be a great night of boxing. That requires legitimate fighters.

According to Esch - fabled king of the four-rounders - the fight will be a brawl and will be over early.

He better hope so. He's never gone more than six rounds in his career, and at 360 pounds, he's not going to be bouncing on his toes if it goes ten.

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As for Holmes, he's closer to 70 than 30. At his age, you don't train to go ten, you train to walk up the ring steps without losing your breath. And that might be the most intriguing thing about this fight. What happens if no one gets knocked out? What happens if they're forced to huff and puff their way through ten long, three-minute rounds? Now that could be entertaining.

My prediction? A lot of shoving highlighted by increased holding, interspersed with an occasional wheezing. Eventual winner? DeCroix. Crazy stuff like this always sells.

The best thing about this fight is that it's on pay-per-view, which means you won't have to worry about scaring the kids by accidentally turning it on while looking for the Discovery Channel.

The worst thing about this fight is facing the guys at work on Monday morning.

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