Right after Antonio "Woe Is Me, Judges Can Never See" Tarver got done blasting every judge who's ever had the temerity, the temerity! to vote for the other guy at the end of the night, Vernon Forrest got on the line during a Tuesday conference call, and provided a vivid contrast in personality.

If you were a consultant in sports/media relations, and wanted to show clients how an athlete should not act to the media, and then how a fighter should act to the media, you couldn't have found two better examples, plopped helpfully side by side.

Tuesday night, we laid out Tarver's laundry list of allegations and smears, so you're all covered on that subject.

Today, let's examine the performance put forth by the classy Forrest, who gloves up with Italian Michele Piccirillo on December 1st at Foxwoods. Tarver's 154 pound strap will be up for grabs in a fight that shouldn't be labeled a gimme, as some pundits have. The artist formerly known as The Viper, before shoulder woes nearly stripped him of his vocation, took the vacated belt on July 28, when he met the durable vet Carlos Baldomir, and impressed the heck out of any and all with his fists, feet, and stamina.

That outing came a year after he was less stellar against Ike Quartey in New York, in a fight that could have gone either way.

The Forrest who fought Baldomir looked like the sort of rangy athlete who could, dare I say it, give fits to Pretty Boy Floyd Mayweather, and at this juncture, there aren't but a miniscule handful of people you can say that about (take a bow, Paul Williams, you are in fine company).

The straightforward and humble Viper, who came to fight fans attention as a favorite entering the 1992 Olympics, was succinct when explaining why he looked so on message against Baldy.

"I wasn't as healthy as I was then," he said. "I'm just healthy again."

"Then" was back in 2003, when Forrest suffered back to back losses to Ricardo Mayorga. The first loss was a loss with a capital L, a TKO3 shocker against the crude clubber. The second loss, six months later, was much more debatable. The Viper was scheduling surgeries instead of fights after that, to shore up his shoulder and elbow in his jab (left) arm. He could've called himself The Cortison Kid instead of the Viper, for all the shots he was taking to dull the pain.

There were three cutups in all, and Forrest was off for two years, rehabbing. He fought twice in 2005, once in 2006, and just once this year. At 36, his time to shine is ebbing, but a win against Piccirillo could kick off a busier, better year, in 2008.

Forrest maintains that he's no longer gun-shy, favoring that reconstructed left arm.

"Early on I was a little concerned about it. I'm not as concerned now because I know there are some things you do to catch on to see if it will hold up. I'm more comfortable now. I think it's more of a mental thing than a physical thing. I'm more comfortable now knowing that I can use it effectively and not worry about re-injuring it again."

Then, he showed an attribute, humility, that would be so instructive for Tarver to soak up, and learn from.

Forrest was asked why he lost to Mayorga, and his one word answer spoke volumes about his character.

"Overconfidence," he explained.

Forrest then went on to clarify, and also dice up one of the hoariest cliches in the game today, a catch all adage overused regularly.

"People say styles make fights," he said. "And people use that term because they don't understand how a guy on paper, who appears to be a lesser guy, beats a better guy. So they say style makes fight, but what happens is he's really overconfident. I didn't study the guy. Only thing I knew is he was the champion, and I wanted his belt. So I just went out there and didn’t fight as a skilled fighter should, I just went out there and fought. Anybody can fight. But the best fighters use their skill and they're able to beat lesser guys.

"I didn’t do what I trained to do, which is to outbox him as opposed to just fighting him. He caught me before I caught him. In the second rematch I thought I won, and so did everybody that watched the fight. Sometimes you win and you make a decision to just move on."

See, Tarver, it isn't that hard.

Is there a chance Forrest could look past the Italian, which wouldn't be wise, considering he's won his last four, and back in 2002, won the IBF 147 strap when he bested the dreadful to watch but still immensely talented Cory Spinks?

"I have every bit of confidence in my skill and my ability. I doubt if that will happen again. A guy beat me because he's better than me, not because I made a mistake."

See that Tarver? He's confident, without being obnoxious in announcing it. And he's humble enough to allow that he can never say never. He "doubts" whether he'll look past a foe again, but he cannot say for certain.

I'm guessing that Vargas will put away Mayorga, and that's the last time we'll see the Nicaraguan, but Forrest doesn't want him to fade away.

"Mayorga is the only fighter that I feel that I have to fight again, and I have to beat to satisfy my career," he said. "There is no Mayorga without Piccirillo, though. I'm going to make sure I handle the business ahead of me come December 1. And whatever happens December 1 is

fair game.

And what about Mayweather? I figure he's locked into 147 for awhile (Cotto, Williams, Cintron, Margarito, Berto late in 2008, maybe), but what if he wants to dodge some of those younger guns, and take on an established name? Might Forrest wants a piece of Pretty Boy?

"That's another fight I've been screaming about," he said. "I fought the best guy in the world at the time he was the best guy in the world, and I'm willing to fight Floyd at the top of his game."

Have there been any business discussions about and you Mayweather, he was asked.

"I can't tell you that," he said, with a chuckle.

"Maybe you just did," I replied.