

## He Who Sings Last, Sings Best

Written by Phil Woolever

Saturday, 15 December 2007 19:00

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You can lead a horse's behind to watered down beer, but you can't make him stop singing.

Most of the British invasion that hit town last week during the fine, fine days of Mayweather – Hatton were wonderful fellows that would probably be welcome just about anywhere. They drained most of the available Guinness beer, and complained with good nature when forced to switch to American lagers.

However, gather them into the MGM Grand Garden for a rare boxing spectacle and you might be confronted with a completely different character, or lack thereof.

Such was the case in jeering the USA, after bringing down a for-then British house singing along with a jovial Tom Jones. After serenading the casino for days before the fight with "There's only one Ricky Hatton" the visitors showered Tyrese Gibson with derisive whistles and boos as he proudly belted out the US Anthem.

I hear Gibson is also a model. He sure as hell looked great, like the African American lady who stood and screamed, waving the only US flag to be seen besides the arena banner.

Some said they were booing Bush but that's still no excuse.

But one bad pitch, even steroid enhanced, shouldn't make a strikeout.

Most Hatton fanatics maintained full party mode with respectable behavior all week. Scanning the arena you saw a sea of white faces, but no racial overtones that spoil such events. It was all about the flag, friend, but that's exactly why many local citizens were upset.

Still, we have a rule around here that often transcends sport. No harm, no foul.

Often, some tiny betting scrap turns an observer into a potentially harmful goon. The lads took defeat very well. I saw one plastic cup of beer thrown from an upper section, and one crumpled, British flag bowler hat get tossed from the first floor VIP seats. After a Tijuana bullring crowd's rioting reaction to Michael Carbajal's intense comeback stoppage of Jorge Arce, I've gotten pretty good at quick audience scans. There were very few, if any, arena altercations besides a couple fellows escorted from their seats.

If all the celebrities noted as attending were actually there they did a great job blending in with the screaming masses. Angelena Jolie or Posh Spice would tend to stand out even in a packed area 40 yards away, especially with devoted scrutiny.

In terms of championship belts and scraps, one of the more politically incorrect moments came amidst the usual immediate post fight chaos as entourages pour into the ring and security plays serious. WBC President Jose Sulaiman knocked "The Ring" belt off Mayweather's startled

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shoulder, and as Sulaiman tried to replace it with his own, a steaming Nigel Collins warned him to back off. The enraged Sulaiman charged Collins and had to be restrained, ending up huffing on a corner stool.

Some titles mean a lot more than others. Mayweather has just about every one from anthill to pinnacle peak, many on display in his Vegas digs. Most important is that just about everyone, from seasoned insider, to Hatton fan on the ceiling, to conquered competitor recognizes Mayweather as one of the finest boxers in many a season.

Both fighters handled ambassador roles with class. In the end, prefight bygones were bygones. Hatton proved he's one of the best sports in boxing, and definitely one of the funniest.

"I was doing all right until I (freakin) slipped," said Hatton with opening deadpan delivery that cracked up the entire postfight ballroom.

Mayweather entered the press conference singing "There's only one Mayweather" as many an Englishman tried to hide the wince.

"I heard y'all all night," said a grinning Mayweather to the makeshift band that kept up their end of the noise as if on the Titanic. They responded with a quick tune in his honor that drew applause from the media.

"I even heard Oscar (de la Hoya) screaming 'Get him' but I knew he wasn't getting me tonight."

After Mayweather led assembled friends and family through a chorus of the "Winter Wonderland" tune with his name instead of Hatton's, Floyd conducted a new musical direction.

"I've got to tell you how to finish it now, though. We got a new finish now:

There's only one Mayweather

There's only one Mayweather

He talks the talk

And he walks the walk

Walking to the Moneyland"

As I later departed from a Yellow Submarine in the MGM west wing, I intersected carpeted corridor space with a tall Tyra type and a woman who looked like she'd be more interested in the nearby rodeo that added to another epic Vegas weekend.

"Floyd kicked ass for the USA tonight!" announced the cowgirl as she came down the hall with casino echo effect.

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“He did?” burst Tyra, “He did?”

“Stuffed the National Anthem up that Hatton’s ass and they deserved it,” said the cowgirl.  
“Those arrogant, bad sport British bastards!”

Tyra nodded a beautiful nod.

At 3 am in the MGM main lobby, the ring for “grand entrances” and promotional events was still working. Various couples or groups of departing tourists trickled up for photos while brightly garbed security patrolled a polished moat of surrounding, red faux velvet ropes.

Was it just the British, or do careless, wrecked characters always seek craziness inside the ring during an event like this?

“All the time,” repeated the sturdy guard, shaking his head as huge multi-screen fight scenes continued to flash above and beyond near empty front desks between Beyonce and Carrot Top.

“All the time.”