

The young lion has a feeling that the old lion has gotten soft, isn't as able to defend his turf, and think the time is right to attack, and wrest the leadership role of the pack—among the 140 pound pride—from the elder.

Can the old lion, Ricky Hatton, keep the young lion, Paulie Malignaggi, at bay on Saturday night at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas? Does Hatton still have enough left, physically, to keep up with the rat a tat style of the New Yorker, who will pop the jab, peck with a combo, and then slip out of range? After in-ring wars, and out-of-the-ring excess, is the Brit Hatton still capable of getting into prime condition for a bout against a slick stylist who'll make him work for 12? Can Paulie take Hatton's best launches? Can Paulie put enough on his punches to dissuade Hatton's charges? Can Hatton fend off a man who may well still be capable of pulling off his mauling brawling one more time? Is Hatton checked out already? Will his contemplation of retirement show in the ring, when the fight goes into the deep waters? Hatton said he had a chest infection in his last bout, against Juan Lazcano, in which he didn't look tremendous. Legit explanation, or an excuse used to cover up a slip in skills? Will Hatton be the same old, same old, or will his two months of work with Floyd Senior give him a shot of adrenaline, and spur a rebirth in his career?

Those are the questions, TSS Universe, time to provide some answers. Or, more accurately, some guesses. Well informed guesses, yes, but we won't know if Hatton can take down Paulie and thus be the frontrunner for the Oscar/Manny winner, or if Paulie can snag the biggest win of his career, and have the best birthday of all time on Sunday, when he turns 28. **WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING: RICKY HATTON VS. PAUL MALIGNAGGI AND JAMES KIRKLAND VS. BRIAN VERA** kicks off at 10:00 p.m. ET.

Fire away, TSS Universe.

NOTE: The art above was painted by Lee Jones. Prints signed by Hatton are for sale on www.2050Sports.com with a percentage of proceeds going to Ricky Hatton's charities.