

The Holidays Can Be Hard, But Most Have Gifts To Be Thankful For..WOODS

Written by Michael Woods

Saturday, 24 December 2011 00:35



It is supposed to, if you go by those commercials on TV, a time of constant cheer, a short span where the American man suspends all animosities and instead luxuriates in vibes of harmony and amiability. If you are a particularly lucky soul, you have placed a four-foot red bow on the luxury auto you purchased for your significant other, and will be rewarded with a look of adoration as intense as has ever been bestowed, and perhaps a lush lip lock under the mistletoe a l'il later. Yes, the Christmas season, or holiday season, if you prefer, is a time of joviality, of convening with family and friends, and toasting the year's bounty.

Supposed to be.

The holidays are not, sometimes, all Hollywood or Madison Ave. cracks them up to be. You may

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be trying to scrounge up money for your mortgage payment, or lamenting the forthcoming cutoff of your unemployment check. Hey, I'm not going all Grinch on you, but I do like to traffic in reality here at TSS. Convening with family for some doesn't always result in a marvelous soiree of sterling conversation and warm recollections. Dec. 25th can mean it's six days from the end of your unemployment benefits.

But I'm guessing there are things for you to be thankful for, that you can hunt a little harder and muster some holiday cheer even if your "luxury auto" is a '98 Accord so busted that car thieves don't bother trying to make off with it. Even if the eggnog you're sipping is a few days past the sell-by date. Did the family make it through to the end of the year with all lives and limbs intact? Mom and dad still of sound mind and body, still able to remind you of the time you peed your pants right before you were to pose on Santa's lap at Sears in 1967? Did you manage to fool 'em all at the office again, hold on to your job, which may not be the ticket to the paradise, but keeps food on the table, which is something that can't be said for millions of kids around the world?

Sometimes, you have to hunt a little harder to find the joy, to fix on those slightly smaller, subtler bounties that you don't drive off a lot, or find in a Tiffany's box.

Even high rollers sometimes go cold, go on losing streaks. Kelly Pavlik was the pride of Youngstown, circa 2007, 2008. The kid had it all, he was the middleweight champion of the world who would provide hope and change for not just a struggling sport, but a rusted out region which has been kicked in the teeth by the death of American-made. Contrast that period of time with today, when Pavlik finds himself at a scary crossroads. He went to rehab last year, and all of us hoped he'd kick the booze jones, settle down and take care of business in that zone where he seemed most comfortable, the ring. But putting the cork in the bottle, and keeping it there, isn't so easy. It takes some folks a few tries. They need to learn a few lessons. We can hope the 29 year-old boxer has figured out that it seems quite likely that booze only complicates matters for him. It is no friend, no salve. On Wednesday, Pavlik was arrested at his home in the Youngstown neighbor Canfield after a neighbor told cops the fighter crashed an ATV he was driving into a telephone pole and lamppost.

This holiday season has had to have been the most tumultuous for the fighter, who announced after an October meeting with manager Cameron Dunkin and promoter Bob Arum that he'd be relocating to California, to train with Robert Garcia, who tutors Tony Margarito and Brandon Rios. This came after he bagged out in the 11th hour on a fight with Darryl Cunningham, leaving cabler Showtime angry as a kicked bucket of bees for leaving them hanging. The OVI charge, to which Pavlik entered a not guilty plea on Friday, comes two weeks after things between him and

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now ex trainer Jack Loew went from bad to worse. Loew was asked about no longer being part of Team Pavlik, and it all spilled out. He said in a TV interview with the local NBC station that he was sick of taking flak for Pavlik, was sick of being insulted as a trainer, after he'd taken a kid from age 9 and they won the middleweight crown together. I spoke to Loew on Thursday, and he was still sort of heated. The man's pride his hurt, but he wasn't backing off anything he said in the interview. "Nothing I said wasn't public knowledge," said the man I like to call Paver Jack, a nod to his past as a paver of driveways.

Loew wanted some credit for spending his money taking young Pavlik to amateur tournaments. He took issue with Pavlik, who he said accused him of having a booze problem himself up til last year.

Yes, no holiday spirit is left in this relationship. By the end of the call with Loew, I felt sad that it had come to this. See, I'm a sort of conflicted tabloid reporter. I like to go where the drama is, but I can't help but get sad when a pair like this splits. These two were from a screenplay. Paver Jack and the kid from the region left behind.

Loew thinks that Pavlik's dad is more interested in Kelly's ring life than his personal life, which has been rocky the last few years. "Whatever is here is in California too," Loew pointed out to me.

By the end of the call, I told Loew I have a guarantee for him. I said that it may take awhile, it may take a few years, but these two will get over this. Some of these stinging words will need to recede, specifics will need to become fuzzy, but they will hug, and be able to focus on the happy times.

But for now, Loew said, he wants the kid, who will turn 30 in April, to get straight. He covered for him, made up excuses when his partying affected him, and now feels jilted, like his loyalty was meaningless. The implication is that the problem is the trainer, that a switch in teachers will cure Kelly. Hey, a new voice, some new techniques could indeed help him grow as a boxer. But my guess is, and this is just a guess, I don't know intimately the depth of his problems, the kid needs tutoring outside the ring. Like, twelve step stuff. I'm not talking smack from my behind here. I've walked that walk. I've hit some of those same sort of "jackpots" Pavlik has, been at scenes where there was broken glass and sirens and lights and the like, and needed some structure and humbling to see straight. Until that stuff stops, it will be impossible for him to even attempt to get back to where he was as a boxer, even if the ghost of Eddie Futch comes back to

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guide him.

By the tail end of the call, Loew even sounds ready to start a reconciliation. "Those were some of the greatest times of my life," he said. "It opened doors for me, and I don't have to wait till later to say how great it was."

No, the holidays are not always the most wonderful time of the year, are they? But we can always hold on to hope, look a bit harder for the gifts we've been given, and I think it helps to open our eyes to the fact that things can get tough in any zip code, even for high rollers.

Merry Christmas, readers. And happy Hannukah, as well. Thanks for logging on to TSS, and remember, if you've had one too many spiked eggnogs, hand over the keys to a sober pal.

[Comment on this article](#)

MisterLee says:

TSS rules! Happy Holidays!!!

dino da vinci says:

TSS does indeed rule! Wishing all of you in the TSS Universe a very happy Holiday Season.

Radam G says:

Maligayang pasko sa-inyo lahat! Shinnen omedeto! Mo'adim Lesimkha! Feliz Navidad! Feliz Nata! Me'le Kalikimaka! Idah Saidan! Eid Mubarak! Natale hilare et Annum Faustumi! Sung Tan Chuk Ha. Holla!

mortcola says:

Beautiful piece, Ed Mike. Happy Holidays and New Year to you and all my TSS friends.

the Roast says:

Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night!

MisterLee says:

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Yo Radam! It's nothing personal, I was just doing my job. I feel very lucky. I fight whoever my promoter puts me up against. Merry Xmas! Yo Roast, how da ladies! Is afn still up in here?

the Roast says:

@MisterLee, Sadly, AFN has not been seen since last December's Great Change. Condor pointed out that Andy was going to retire and spend more time with his family. I kind of remember reading that. If AFN wanted to pull a Hagler and walk away I wish him well. His TSS family will never forget him. As far as the ladies go, I can't go in to detail for security purposes.

brownsugar says:

Woodsy that was memorable and candid Holiday Send-Off.

I read some scattered posts a while back where it looked like the trainer and his fighter had turned on each other. Like the article says, People with addictions have a need to project thier failures onto other people. Usually it's the people who are the closest and love them the most. I'm sure our resident Psyche man Mort could elaborate further..

Pavliks condition must be pretty bad, the Lampost he trashed was on the property of a neighbor who lived just up the road. You would have thought Pavlik would have expressed his apologies and extended a promise to put things right. According to police Pavlik fled the scene and allowed his buddy (who also riding an ATV) to take the blame when the police pulled up to Pavliks home shortly after the incident.

After police pressed his accomplice further he admitted Pavlik was the one who caused the damage.

Pavliks friend might have gotten away with the ruse but Pavlik made things worse by becoming belligerent toward the police, he began shouting at the police as they were questioning his buddy. (honestly with friends like this who needs enemies)

Only a drunk continues to dig a deeper hole from themselves while drawing attention to their folly at the same time.. Obviously Pavlik needs to make some hard decisions..... and not about boxing,..... but towards making an honest effort in overcoming his addiction. I'm sure he must be aware of this..... I wish him the best.

Happy Holidays Make it the Best one Ever!!!!