photo courtesy Rachel McCarson

As you probably have already heard by now, Paul Williams' career as a fighter is very likely over. More than that, his life itself will be substantially different than anything he could have possibly imagined before Sunday morning's tragic motorcycle accident. Early reports indicate that Williams, age thirty, will be paralyzed from the waist down for the rest of his life.

It's absolutely heart-wrenching.

I cannot help to reminisce about the last (and only time) I saw Mr. Williams in person. It was his very last fight. Williams, intending to bounce back from his loss to middleweight champion Sergio Martinez and tough encounter with Erislandy Lara, was set to face Nobuhiro Ishida in Corpus Christi, Texas.

As a Lone Star State-based boxing writer, I'm always excited to hear about upcoming events within driving distance from where I live near Houston.This one meant even more, though. We boxing writers all have our favorites and Paul Williams has been one of mine for a long time.

I was excited to see him.

The card was stacked with some pretty big names, too.Along with Williams, former heavyweight title challenger Chris Arreola and undefeated light heavyweight titlist Tavoris Cloud were set to appear.

At the weigh-in, Paul Williams was unmistakable. Having only seen him on television, his feature set was as distinct in person as you'd think it'd be. He was tall, lanky and skinny, but he looked like he could probably whoop anyone else in the room if it came right down to it. Yet his most impressive attribute, to me at least, remained to be seen.

Somehow, I ended up sitting right next to Tavoris Cloud and his family at the weigh-in. Cloud was, in person (at least at that very moment) just like he appears to be when he fights. He looked flat-out bothered to be there and ready to rumble right then and there with anyone. He alternated pacing around the room like a hungry lion with trying to remain seated between his family and me rocking back and forth like a mad man. At one point, I went ahead and moved my

chair away from him (imperceptibly of course) because it seemed like he might explode on someone at any moment and I figured he'd choose me over his family.

Williams was different. When the bell rings, Paul Williams really fights like "The Punisher." He throws away his God-given height advantage, comes right in close and hurls a hundred punches a round. He's as fierce a man in the ring as one can be, but outside of it he seemed quite different to me.He just seemed like a normal guy.

Paul Williams walked around quiet and subdued. He almost appeared to be a little shy, but not in an off-putting way sometimes designed to keep people away. Everything about him seemed genuine. I saw him sit down next to some kids and talk them like he was their big brother or something. He'd smile and take pictures with fans.He'd sign gloves and take pictures for whoever asked.He just appeared to be a really nice and laid-back guy who had it all figured out.

The next night, he virtually shut out Ishida, using the style that earned his impressive 41-2 record. I was surprised to see so few other media members on press row that night. Sure, the fight was in a relatively small venue, but I'd seen many more people at the Chavez, Jr. fight in a smaller venue just a few months before and no one would dispute which guy had been more successful to date.

After the win, the lack of the usual suspects at the press conference made it small and nondescript. Williams came in happy as a lark, though. He looked just as he did the day before at the weigh-in, except that this time he was wearing sunglasses to help hide the bumps and bruises a twelve-round slugfest tends to create, even for the fighter on the good end of things.

Williams walked up to the podium and talked about his plans. He was happy about his win and looked forward to bigger and better things. There was hardly a question for the man who was once so feared in his own division that he had to move up two and three weight classes just to get more fights.

He didn't seem to notice how small the group of media members was that had bothered to come. Either that or he didn't care. He smiled for the photographers and gave quotes out to those who wanted them. He was all smiles and even took pictures with those borderline media types that seem to make their way into press rooms somehow, too.

When it was over, as I walked out towards the parking lot, I looked back to see Paul pacing slowly behind me. He was wearing a bright red track suit and talking on his cell phone to someone who could probably hear the warmth of his bright, genuine smile on the other end. I will never forget that image of him.

Paul Williams was one hell of a fighter, but by the accounts I have read or heard from my boxing writing brethren, he is an even more impressive human being. From what I understand, he was as successful in his business investments as he was doing the work he did to fund them.More than that, though, the genuine goodness he displayed to everyone he came across is something that accidents on motorcycles and days spent in a wheelchair can never take away.

Paul Williams may never walk again, but something tells me he will live his life the same way he always did. He'll still smile and be a joy to everyone he encounters. And his life will be worth more outside of the ring than it is in it, and he'll be okay with that.

Comment on this article

the Roast says:

Good luck Paul. Fight harder than you ever have before.

teaser says:

Yes Paul....fight fight..never give in...we know You ain't no quitter

ultimoshogun says:

Geez Louise, more sad news....Wish you the best LTP!

deepwater says:

good luck paul. I worked as lead tech in the er trauma unit. do not ride a motorcycle in crowded cities if at all. too many clowns on the road plus text messaging = wheelchair or grave.

Radam G says:

No comments! Holla!

dino da vinci says:

[QUOTE=Radam G;16730]No comments! Holla![/QUOTE]

C'mon Radam, you're better than that.

deepwater says:

paul williams will never walk again or use his manhood. severed cord = dead lower body.

amayseng says:

this is horrifying to say the least.

i have carried this anguish all day, never even meeting or knowing paul.

most likely he will never have control of going to the bathroom again either deepwater..

we watch these men put their lives on the line , it isnt like watching a basketball game or tennis match, it is almost like we can connect with these fighters on another level even if never meeting them or watching them fight in person. having followed a fighter for years and years and watching him in that ring, it takes a toll on me seeing him become paralyzed. it is hard to deal with i feel horrible for him.

does paul have children? i think he does, i hope he does.

miracles can happen, just pray he may walk again.

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Radam G says:

Yup! He has three toddlers I believe.

@dino da vinci, don't miss read me. I'm wordless. Riding motorcycles have resulted in the demise of several of my boxing pals and friends. After one boxer's death and one's injury this year, I'm totally drained and just plain, ole wordless. Holla!

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dino da vinci says:

Misunderstood. I always look forward to your thoughts.

Fight on, Paul.

Radam G says:

No problem. It's all good. I too hope that LTP can pull a late, great Willie Pep -- after Pep's broke his back and neck in a plane crash -- and Vinny Paz, who came back after his car crash. Holla!

DaveB says:

This really, really sucks. I'm more depressed about this than hearing about Johnny Tapia and I feel for Johnny Tapia. I guess that was less surprising and hopefully his pain is over. Paul Williams' is just beginning. Praying for a miracle.

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ali says:

I could give a fu*k and a half about Paul being able to fight again. I just hope he able to walk again and live a normal life. I will be rooting for u homie.

Radam G says:

It is all good, SCLA Ali. Calm down! It will be one heckuva a modern-day story made for Hollywood if he is "able to fight again," especially at the elite level. Believe in LUCK, and drop the "give a fu*k. Just sayin!' I hope that the man "walk again and live a normal life," and box. He's good copy. I will "be rooting [for it all], u homie."Holla!

brownsugar says:

seeing somebody like Paul,..... with his high level of youthfulness and drive in his current condition is hard to accept. But Paul is still looking on the brightside. He said his fight with Canello has only been "Pushed back" and if he never fights or walks again,... he can be found on his fishing boat. He's reportedly in no pain and besides the back, he's barely has a scratch on him. He's actually sorry that he won't be able to provide any exciting fights for the fans for a while.... That sounds like the Paul I've watched for the last 5 years or so.