

Small Consolation for Plant-Eaters

Written by Springs Toledo
Monday, 11 June 2012 12:26



In the early nineties, I was one of a ragtag band of boxers who trained at the Boston YMCA on Huntington Avenue. Sparring matches were held on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings and were closely monitored by licensed trainers. After hours, when they had left the building, things got nasty. Renegade trainers drifted in and held unauthorized bouts where weight classes didn't matter and headgear was frowned upon. There was blood on the walls. There

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was blood on the *ceiling*. One night I stood across the ring from an opponent who had a sculpted torso like Marvin Hagler, or come to think of it, Tim Bradley. You could grate Parmigiano-Reggiano on his abs.

When the bell rang, I proceeded with caution. He was quick, and stepped in to land a flush right hand. I should have seen stars. But I didn't. I threw a lazy jab on purpose to test his power again on my terms. He did as expected and countered with another right. I turned my head with it, riding it out to gauge its force. For a fighter—especially one who routinely fought for his life in underground smokers—what I learned in that first round was a great relief. He hit about as hard as Aunt Madge.

Privately after the bout, I asked him if he was a vegetarian. The question surprised him and he answered that he was. “Go and get yourself a steak,” I said. “Plant-eaters don't beat carnivores.” He offered what I'm sure was an impressive oration about healthy protein alternatives like tofu and soybeans though I didn't much know what he was talking about and my parting remark told him I didn't much care: “*Tofu ain't flesh.*”

Untold numbers in the holistic health field believe that human beings are natural *herbivores*; that our hands are designed for berry-picking, not holding down prey, and our so-called canines are too small and flat to tear out flesh. What's more, they say that our digestive systems have not yet adapted to meat and cite studies connecting obesity, heart disease, and other health risks to the delicatessen. Under the glaring light of new science, my flip remarks look like medieval superstition. Or do they? Within a few months, my opponent became less enlightened. He added red meat to his diet. Already quick-fisted with sound technique, his punching power was soon denting my ribs and we both knew why.

Civilians have every reason to eat tofu and beans in lieu of meat; to build their lifestyles around health consciousness, comfort, and self-preservation. They have every reason to stay out of boxing rings. But don't mistake a civilian for a fighter. Humanist Dr. Harold Hillman doesn't. He identifies what he calls the “vegetarian conscience” and lists activities that “vegetarian personalities” could be logically expected to vigorously oppose. Between “child labor” and “infanticide” sits “boxing.” In his defense, I suspect that his ability to appreciate the sweet science is no more advanced than my ability to appreciate the sedentary lifestyle of a soft-bellied academic.

Sugar Ray Robinson's decidedly anti-humanist achievement of knocking out ninety-seven men

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would horrify Hillman. His carnivorous habits would have called for smelling salts to revive Hillman. At a contract-signing luncheon in Chicago before his sixth match against Jake LaMotta in 1951, Robinson asked the waiter for a big glass of beef blood. The waiter was as confused as LaMotta was disturbed. "I'll get you some extra gravy right away," he said. "No, not the gravy," Robinson corrected him. "The actual blood, the blood in the meat before it's cooked." When the glass was set down before him, he turned to LaMotta. "It's what makes a skinny guy like me so strong," he said as he added just a pinch of salt and pepper.

"You're outta your mind," said LaMotta.

To the uninitiated, anyone who gets into the ring is "outta his mind." Indeed; if self-preservation and material pursuits are all that matters, then risking one's life for a chance at glory can *only be* insane.

It's been over ten years since the Huntington Avenue YMCA in Boston ended its boxing program. Odds are 4-1 that the executive director at the time was a vegetarian.

Saturday night, 4-1 underdog Tim Bradley was given a dubious decision over Manny Pacquiao. I predicted a knockout of the most violent sort and though I didn't mention it, part of my reasoning was rooted in the same evidence-based superstition that prompted me to warn my opponent all those years ago: *Plant-eaters don't beat carnivores*. Bradley is the picture of health and wellness. His discipline goes beyond that of mere vegetarianism during training camp, he becomes downright *vegan* and refrains from consuming any animal product. No meat. No fish. No milk. He makes the not-outlandish claim that all that green leafy stuff gives him a surplus of energy. I'm a believer. Had it not been for what hand-wringing academics deplore as a most unfortunate choice of occupations, he'd probably live to be a hundred and ten.

But he sure can't hit.

Despite the fact that Bradley understands how to fight southpaws enough to move to his left, away from their power line, his offense was of the "get off me!" variety. It reminded me of those Animal Planet episodes where a soon-to-be consumed herbivore flails in a panic just before the

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beast clamps down on its throat. Pacquiao stalked without fear and shook off left hooks and right hands like a prep cook would wet lettuce.

I watched the bout three times in a vain attempt to see how it was that the judges decided in favor of the plant-eater. "I thought Bradley gave Pacquiao a boxing lesson," said Las Vegas judge Duane Ford. "I went in with a clear mind." That's hard to reconcile given that Bradley was out landed by Pacquiao in ten of twelve rounds. The scattered punches that Bradley did manage to land inflicted no damage and the fact that he landed only 19% of them confirms that they weren't much more than panicky flurries. Panicky flurries constitute neither "clean, effective punching" nor "effective aggression," both of which are a major part of the judging criteria. My scorecard was 117-112 for Pacquiao.

That knockout I predicted was there all night. Had Pacquiao reversed his direction—had he simply went right instead of left—those left blasts he landed would have ended matters once and for all. He gave Bradley the assist he needed because he wasn't positioning his back foot in front of Bradley's chin in a straight line, in the power line. As it was, Pacquiao and the newly-inducted Hall of Fame trainer Freddie Roach neither saw nor made the adjustment. The lion circled the lamb in the wrong direction but proved it was a lion, and the lamb flailed, survived, and took a split decision that defies explanation.

Then again, perhaps none of Saturday night's blunders defy explanation. According to holistic gurus, meat promotes over-acidification of the body and one of the symptoms is *unclear thinking*. In that case, someone needs to check the books at Tom Colicchio's Craftsteak at the MGM Grand, where the portions are big and the porterhouse is still breathing. Four-to-one says judges Ford and CJ Ross have standing reservations from way back.

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[Comment on this article](#)

Radam G says:

Nice, LIKE ALWAYS for TSS Pugistic Grandmaster Scribe S-To.

Time for me to get down with the following satire:

"The Ugly American" was hoping that Da Manny robbery was going to be reality distortion accepted as a Cinderella -- I mean Cali Cranium Crusherella -- SHOCKING WIN! But "America, The Beautiful" wasn't havin' it!

She slapped that bold, cheating, uncle bytch down, and told her to shut da double fudge up!

"This is the land of the free, and home of the brave. You can just rob Da Manny's arse like he is a runaway slave. This jive ain't right! Da Manny CLEARLY won that fight. It ain't Tim's fault. He aight! And now he's gonna have a lot of moola in some bank vault. He fought with a lot of fright. But a gift from the biggest haters of the night. Holla!

Matthew says:

Well said. I thought there were a couple of times that Pacquiao could have put Bradley away, but was unable to. He had Bradley wobbly on at least three occasions, but was unable to land the follow-up punches to finish the job. Bradley deserves some credit, for while he was a sucker for the left hand all night, he moved his upper body enough to avoid a follow-up barrage that could have ended his evening. While I thought Pacquiao looked better than he has since the Clottey or even the Cotto fight, he has definitely slipped. That being said, this was the worst decision I have seen in 30 years of following the sport.

Real Talk says:

This fight turned me off of boxing. Good look Bob Arum, I'm unplugged and not even looking forward to any fights because of bull\$#!t like this. I got to find something else to do with my Sat. nights when Top Rank is promoting. I'm officially part of the next week club. News Flash Bob, your old and your days are numbered in low digits. Money aint coming with you in the ground an if it's a Hell below, your definately gonna go. They say a pictures worth a thousand words how much is a video? That smile after the decision is stuck in my minds vision, Boxing will celebrate the day that you're no longer in it. Raise a glass.....Toast to the SCUMBAG!!!! DUECES

brownsugar says:

ruthless post RealTalk, ...take no prisoners.

brownsugar says:

Even Judging from Springs' rugged good looks as displayed by his TSS photo, I would have

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never dreamed he was boxer.

I wouldn't think anyone who could read write such compelling stories had at one time voluntarily participated in a sport where taking punches to the head is mandatory.

It is a riddle, why some punchers can punch, and other's cannot, sometimes all the exercise in the world doesn't help.

Although I'm not totally convinced about the beef blood yet, I need to see some clinical studies (LOL)

I started boxing at 26 years old at 165lbs, The hardest puncher I faced was a skinny darkskinned kid that weighed 150lbs. When he blasted me in our sparring session (with 14oz gloves with headgear on),....and he rattled me so hard I saw spots while I dipped about 4 inches at the knees. after a couple more flurries like that the coach looked at me and asked if I wanted to continue, I had too much pride to say no....so I just looked at him fiercely like I was ready,..... but he told me to take "blow" anyways. (I needed it)

There is no mercy in this brutal sport as folks began to ask me stupid questions, (we always had a crowd because we had 2 guys training for the Olympics, TV news cameras were even a fixture some days) The onlookers asked me stupid stuff like " damn,... he nearly knocked your head off, how did that feel?"

The coach put me back in with him after 5 minutes and I decided to throw a 1-2 when ever he got with-in range because I was determined that he would never touch me again in this lifetime..... I had the height, weight, and reach so it was simple to execute. I had to sweep the right because he held his hands up so high and I kept catching him around the lower jawline an ear,.... surprisingly he quit at the end of the round and cried to the coach so we were not allowed to spar together again. Now that I think about it,... sparring with him was what I needed most(especially since I had a late start),.. getting cracked in the head by a sharp puncher in training will make a fighter improve faster than anything else... but I had never been at home with receiving blows to the head.

don't know what that guy had for lunch,... but he hit me harder than anyone else in my lifetime, while some 180-200 pounders I fought couldn't break an egg.

After watching Bradley go 12 brisk rounds with Pac,..expending many calories of energy, and still fighting on fresh legs in round 12, I seriously wanted to go vegan for a while.... if Bradley can take 20 punches from Pac per round and not go down,...even after he foolishly tried to trade and go toe-to-toe with Pac on multiple occasions,... a Vegan diet probably has it's benefits (I'll let you know)....

Even though I picked Bradley to win(which was merely fan support)..... I didn't think he'd go 3 rounds,... the shocking part of the fight is that bradley did as well as he did,...So my lowered expectations were rewarded. Bradley DID NOT win by any stretch of the imagination, but he didn't disgrace himself either. I'm hearing JMM wants a piece of Bradley now...

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deepwater says:

we wuz robbed. wtf happened??? arum laughing all the way to the bank. no rematch!!!

deepwater says:

bob arum + sheldon adelson+ vegas mob= the worst boxing score is no accident. wtf were they thinking? well the judges were thinking we gotta score this for the underdog no matter what happens so a billion dollars could be won in the black market. a billion dollars sure does pay for illegal nukes which never get talked about. big money=big weapons. when crazy things happen like this it is by no means an accident. a billion \$\$\$\$ was transfered on account of this fight.

sfmoran62 says:

You are a literary giant. Great article. SFM

Robert Curtis says:

Brilliant writing. Wish I'd known about the YMCA boxing when I was growing up in Boston. I don't know about going totally vegan. I knew someone who went vegetarian and lost so much muscle in just 3 months that she had to get back to meat. But I am pretty convinced that a plant-based diet is the secret to longevity and quality of life. The problem with the modern western diet is too much meat, too much processing, and too many empty calories(sugars, white flours, etc). A portion of animal protein should be no bigger than a cigarette pack and that should be consumed only once a day. And vegetables should only be eaten raw. BTW, I finally watched the fight today. I thought Bradley did a respectable job, although Manny clearly landed the most shots and the most power shots. Manny has looked better. I was surprised that Manny could not produce a knockout. Hope Bradley enjoys his title. He may not have it long.

zoeirtpc says:

[url=http://www.canadagoosechilliwickfemme.fr]Canada Goose Pas CherShe adds, "Whether I'm acting, modeling or running my fashion business, ultimately my goal is to blend all of these activities into my life. [url=http://www.norgecanadagoosejakke.net]canada goose parkaGyyrwyyp [url=http://www.billiggoosejakker.eu]http://www.billiggoosejakker.eu For the necktie development in the history the promotion by the king Louis is very important. [url=http://www.michaelkorsonlineoutlet.ca]http://www.michaelkorsonlineoutlet.ca

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