

Tommy Morrison: Don't Ever Question His Character Or Constitution

Written by Frank Lotierzo
Monday, 26 August 2013 20:53



During the last few days there have been a plethora of rumors swirling around the internet and boxing circles concerning the health and well being of former WBO heavyweight title holder and contender Tommy Morrison 48-3-1 (42). I'm not a rumor guy nor do I have clue one as to how he's afflicted medically.

From what has been posted on most reliable platforms, Morrison is battling Miller Fisher Syndrome/Guillain Barre Syndrome and not HIV/AIDS as most media and fans assumed. According to Fightnews.com, Miller Fisher Syndrome/Guillain Barre Syndrome is a very rare nervous disease that causes abnormal muscle coordination, paralysis of the eye muscles, absence of the tendon reflexes, muscle weakness and respiratory failure. A largely unknown disease, it has touched the sports world before as former NFL quarterback Danny Wuerffel suffered the same diagnosis a few years back and was successfully treated."

The only thing that can be said for certain is that Tommy Morrison is going through a tough patch in his life and hopefully everything will work out for him in due time. At 44 he's still a relatively young man and no doubt has plenty of fight still left in him. And because of his current situation I think it's a good time to address an episode of Morrison's career that a lot of boxing fans remember, but don't fully appreciate how terrifically he responded to such adversity after

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he was stopped during the signature bout of his career at the time.

The date was October 18, 1991 when the 28-0 Morrison was literally taking apart 17-0 Ray Mercer in what was the first signature bout for both fighters at the Convention Center in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Morrison had lost to Mercer at the 1988 Olympic Trials in the heavyweight division three and half years earlier as Mercer went on to capture a gold medal at the 1988 Olympics in Seoul Korea. Morrison and Mercer turned pro three months apart, however it was Morrison who was getting more publicity and attention being that he had a left hook that was putting his opponents to sleep in the same manner that a young Mike Tyson had done four years earlier as he climbed up the ranks. And the fact that he was a relative of actor John Wayne didn't hurt the story surrounding his career and upbringing. And don't be misled by what I said regarding Morrison's early notoriety, Mercer was also showing promise on the way up, beating name heavyweights Bert Cooper and Francesco Damiani.

On the night Morrison and Mercer came to blows, Morrison was killing Mercer for the first three and a half rounds. He was bouncing left hooks and right hands off of Mercer's head and chin so hard that not only did you feel like you were getting concussed just watching the fight, but Mercer should've been outta there. It was at this time that the boxing world discovered that Ray Mercer had an all-world chin and wasn't easily discouraged. By the middle of the fourth round Morrison started to wind down and needed a breather, and then Mercer started to assert the action and began to come on. Early in the fifth round Mercer spun out of the corner and nailed Morrison with a beautiful left-hook right hand combination that froze Tommy against the ropes and it was at this time that Morrison was hit flush with three short right hooks followed by a finishing left hook while he was already out on his feet as he crumbled to the canvas. The fight was halted without Morrison ever being given a count.

The devastating knockout that Morrison suffered at the hands of Mercer was one of the most abrupt and brutal knockouts ever seen in a heavyweight fight. It was frightening to see and it was not a given that Morrison would ever fight again, let alone fight again without being haunted by the ghost of what happened to him against Mercer. And that's exactly what Morrison did. He fought 23 times after he was stopped by Mercer and never once appeared to be glove shy or enter the ring with trepidation. And this is where I believe Morrison has never been given his due by the boxing media or fans, on how much that says about Tommy Morrison's character and constitution.

Not many fighters have come back after suffering such a brutal knockout the way Morrison did. In every fight after Mercer, Morrison wasn't afraid to let his hands go at all. Two years after the Mercer fight Morrison got off to a good start against Michael Bentt but was suddenly caught

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midway through the first round and was stopped in a bout for the WBO heavyweight title. And yes, even after being stopped in brutal fashion twice, Morrison let his hands go in subsequent bouts against big hitters Donovan Ruddock and Lennox Lewis.

What some fans and observers forget is the fact that a fighter is never more open and vulnerable than when he letting his hands go and on the attack. Sure, we've seen fighters suffer a brutal knockout before, but many of them come back and adopt more of a safety first style and only cut loose when they read that the opponent is out of position or isn't of the mind to retaliate or counter--fighters sense this--and that's when they get off. Not Morrison, despite what happened to him against Mercer and Bentt, he let his hands go and didn't shy away from who he was as a fighter, and that was an all-out attacker/swarmer who could only be effective pushing the fight and bringing it to the opponent.

No, Tommy Morrison will not be remembered as an all-time great heavyweight, he'll be best remembered for his power and big left hook. And yes, his power was legitimate when he could deliver it and didn't run out of steam as the fight progressed. Others will think of him and remember that he wasn't the most durable heavyweight they've seen, and that's a fair point. But I submit that Tommy Morrison was every bit as mentally tough and emotionally fit as any heavyweight we've seen in a long time.

A fighter's ability to take a punch has nothing to do with heart, but how responds to being stopped does and Morrison passed that test as well as it could be passed. And that puts him in a select group, so small that it wouldn't take long to call roll. Morrison seemed to understand that, in order to be successful, he needed to live by the sword, which meant he had to be willing to die by it too. It's to his credit that he accepted that.

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amayseng says:

an exciting fighter for sure..

did he really have aids or hiv?

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i have heard so many yes and no's i dont know.

his up and down life could be compared to tysons... in and out of the ring

Bernie Campbell says:

I heard some ridiculous statement on his part that he wanted a part of Klitschko! Only a few years ago! Lotta rumours, I know he was looking for some coin! I guess that's the reason Why he hooked up with Stallone back in the day! A leopard doesn't change his spots! Was WBO champ at one point! Quite a feat in those days! From Hollywood to Champion! Max Baer did it the other way around! I don't know much about Morrison's background! But he should have given back! To help young fighters coming up, even to lend his name! That I think is Bucsh!

brownsugar says:

[QUOTE=amayseng;35486]an exciting fighter for sure..

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HIV is no longer the death sentence it once was. Magic Johnson came to our job to promote Sodexo, he looks like a million dollars. They even say he tests negative... for those who can afford a full blood transfusion on a regular basis anything is possible.

Coxs Corner says:

Too many fans don't appreciate the mental aspect of the sport. As Frank points out Morrison didn't lose his mental toughness and heart when entering the ring after his brutal knockout loss to Mercer. It can be a difficult thing for many fighters to overcome. Roy Jones Jr. was never the same after his knockout loss to Antonio Tarver. Mercer continued to fight the only way he could and hope to be successful and that was as a swarming style aggressor who pushes the fight. He never backed down from that challenge. I wonder how Morrison would do if he came up today? He probably couldn't beat Vitaly Klitschko but he would be the biggest threat either Klitschko ever faced with his speed, power and willingness to get inside to try to deliver his power which is something that most of the Klits opponents shy off doing once they step in the ring.

Bernie Campbell says:

Cmon boys, this article really has bored me! Youre giving me a freakin tribute to someone that was out of control! Now how bout some "relavant" ink on Axel Schultz!

kidcanvas says:

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he introduced himself to me back in 97 at the biloxi grand casino where we were doing the first womens PPV and he had a girl he was working with . i was wrapping some hands and he ccame up and says. hi im tommy morrison (like i didnt know) and we had some pleasantries and when he walked away all i could think was what a rreally nice polite guy he is.. i wish him and his family all the love and prayers ..

Bernie Campbell says:

I don't care what fights he had, or how much politicking he did! I would personally enjoy watching Gehardus Coetzee highlight films all day rather listen to the rhetoric! I presume the boxing honchos want to clean up the image of the sport!

The Shadow says:

Nephew of John Wayne!

Bernie Campbell says:

He could be a distant cousin to Cheech Marin for all I know, my vote is a nay!

Radam G says:

Tommy is the first-degree nephew of Marion Morrison, aka John Wayne. Holla!

Bernie Campbell says:

So what if he was a fcn masonhh!, whats he want a fcn medal! WBC, WBA, IBF? Dah!

ultimoshogun says:

We lost Tommy Morrison today fellas...RIP Tommy, I always enjoyed your fights.

amayseng says:

what????? i gotta check the news.. man this sucks

dino da vinci says:

Condolences to the Morrison family.

@Radam. I don't believe that that was ever verified.