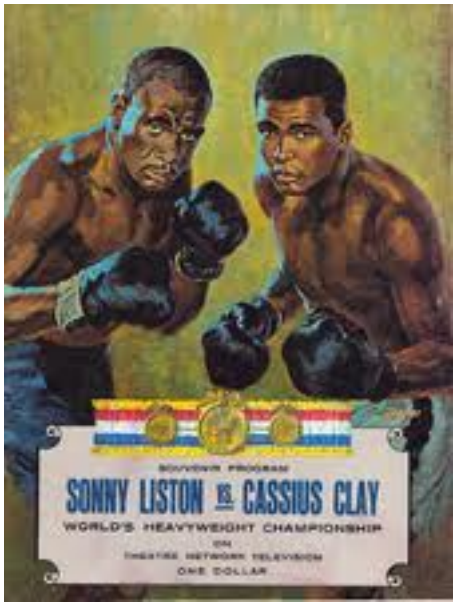

"Clay comes out to meet Liston and Liston starts to retreat, if Liston goes back an inch farther he'll end up in a ringside seat. Clay swings with his left, Clay swings with his right, Look at young Cassius carry the fight. Liston keeps backing, but there's not enough room, It's a matter of time till Clay lowers the boom. Now Clay lands with a right, what a beautiful swing, and the punch raises the Bear clean out of the ring. Liston is still rising and the ref wears a frown, for he can't start counting till Sonny comes down. Now Liston is disappearing from view, the crowd is getting frantic, But radar stations have picked him up somewhere over the Atlantic. Who would have thought when they came to the fight? That they'd witness the launching of a human satellite. Yes the crowd did not dream when they put down their money, That they would see a total eclipse of the Sonny."

If you're a boxing fan living in 2011, regardless of your age, you've no doubt heard that poem recited by former undisputed heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali. Yes, that's the poem that garnered Clay/Ali a massive amount of attention heading into his title bout against defending champion Sonny Liston back in February of 1964. Because of the trash and jive Cassius Clay talked on his way up the heavyweight ranks, he drew massive attention from the media. In what seemed to have happened over night, Clay, later known as Muhammad Ali, became "must see" when he fought. And it didn't matter a bit that most of Clay's bouts on his way up weren't all that exciting. What mattered and stuck with most fans is what he said he was going to do to Archie Moore, Henry Cooper and Doug Jones before he fought them prior to challenging Liston.

Before tangling with Liston, the only thing that separated Clay from past contenders was his blend of never seen before hand and foot speed. However, his mouth and cockiness were just as much or more a part of the reason for the attention he drew. The young Clay stole his bravado from professional wrestling's "Gorgeous George" and soon realized that it drew more attention to his upcoming fights than anything he did in the ring. No one following or covering professional boxing during the winter of 1963 had clue-one as to whether or not Clay was a

worthy challenger to Liston. In fact most thought Sonny would mutilate Clay inside of two rounds and then he'd probably never be heard from again. Actually, prior to fighting Liston, Clay hadn't shown a thing in the ring as a fighter that he belonged in the same ring with Sonny let alone he was capable of dethroning him. Ali went on to back up his talk and bravado throughout a 20 plus year career. But the point is, he sure stirred up a ton of interest with his words and talk before he proved he could really fight.

In boxing, talk is Showtime.

People/fans love to be entertained and if a fighter does something outside (act, talk or dress) of the venue where they perform that separates them from the others in their field, there's a very good chance they'll draw most of the attention away from there colleagues and peers. See Cassius Clay circa 1963-64 as exhibit-A. And it doesn't matter whether or not the fighter is liked or despised. What matters is that massive amounts of people/fans care enough to in most cases pay to watch them succeed or fail.

In boxing talk is Showtime.

Two weeks ago former WBA heavyweight title holder David Haye 25-2 (23) lost a lopsided decision to IBF/WBA/WBO title holder Wladimir Klitschko 56-3 (49). Haye didn't even compete with Klitschko, who in spite of Haye's tentativeness, didn't even press him. However, Klitschko-Haye was the most anticipated heavyweight title bout since Lennox Lewis defended his title against former undisputed champ Mike Tyson in June of 2002. Yet Haye was only 4-0 (3) fighting as a heavyweight after relinquishing his cruiserweight title. On top of that, Haye's title winning effort against Nikolay Valuev was perhaps the most boring and least entertaining bouts in the annals of heavyweight history. Against Valuev, Haye fought passively and threw less than a handful of meaningful punches during the 12-rounds the bout lasted.

In boxing talk is Showtime.

What separated Haye from past Klitschko opponents in his recent title defenses was, Samuel Peter, Eddie Chambers, Ruslan Chagaev and Hasim Rahman didn't talk any trash or smack nor did they promise to decapitate Wladimir and then his older brother Vitali (WBC titleholder) before the fight. Prior to fighting Wladimir Klitschko, Haye hadn't demonstrated to the boxing public that he possessed the tools needed to take down Klitschko. But in all fairness to David Haye, he yelled and screamed about what he was going to do to the Klitschko brothers for two years whenever the lights were on and the crowd had gathered. And it didn't matter what he had shown in the ring in his four previous heavyweight bouts, to which contradicted him having a real shot at beating Klitschko. In addition to that, most fans were accurate in assessing that once in the ring, Haye wouldn't open up and take the risk necessary to give himself an honest chance at scoring the upset. Speaking of an upset, Haye's mouth really brought the odds down - and by the night of the bout, Klitschko was less than a 2-1 favorite and Haye was actually the betting favorite in Britain. That was the genius of David Haye.

In boxing, talk is Showtime.

David Haye did a masterful job of talking himself into being part of the most anticipated heavyweight title bout in nine years. On top of that, it's reported that he'll earn upwards of $15 million dollars. Good for him. He exercised a tried and true formula and did so better than countless others who've tried before. And regardless of most observers and fans knowing deep inside, that he wasn't the fighter/boxer to end Klitschko's title reign, he played on their emotion and hope and sold the place out.

In boxing, talk is Showtime.

As terrific as David Haye was in talking up and selling the most anticipated heavyweight title bout in almost a decade, he must bow and pay homage to the greatest huckster and salesman in professional boxing today, Floyd Mayweather. For the past decade Mayweather has been among boxing's top-five pound-for-pound fighters. Yet, he's practically avoided the top fighters of his era, especially since he's been fighting as a welterweight. Mayweather smartly understood that his fights aren't exciting, he's boring when he presents himself as a decent guy and is likable. So he made a conscious decision to adopt the role as the bad guy and routinely goes out of his way to say and do things that the boxing community will become outraged over. And it works.

Think about it. Mayweather is fighting 24-year old Victor Ortiz this coming September. Everyone knows that Floyd is a level or two above Ortiz as a fighter and most likely the fight won't be competitive. But because Mayweather has fulfilled the role as the bad guy, a persona that really sells in professional wrestling, the fight will do big numbers. Simply because many will buy the fight in the hopes that they see Mayweather lose. Again, we know who's going to win, we know that it won't be an exciting or action packed fight, yet it'll be a financial success because Mayweather has told boxing fans in many unflattering ways that he's must see, despite the fact that he isn't.

In boxing, talk is Showtime. And that's not necessarily a bad thing, that's just the way it is and there's umpteen examples that can be submitted as undeniable proof.

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