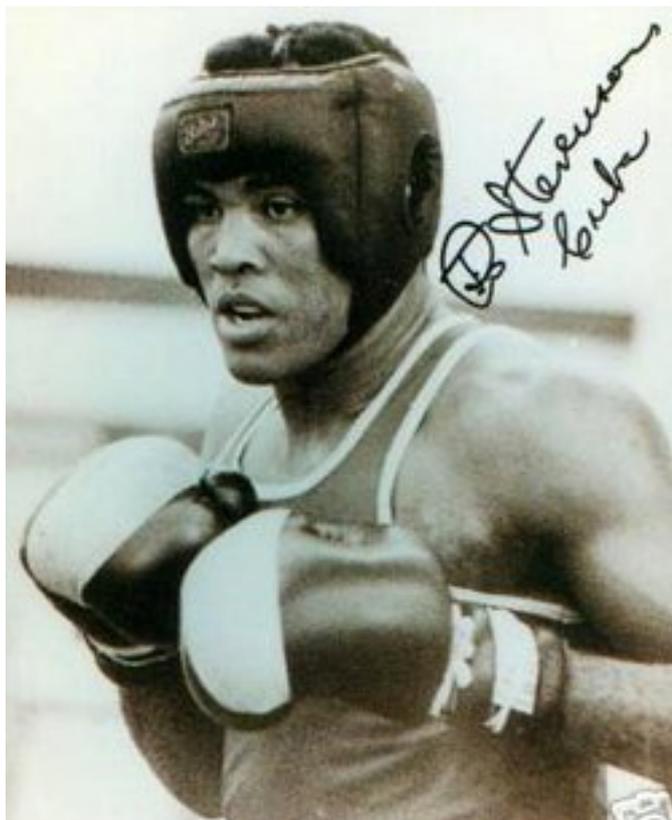


Teofilo Stevenson (1952-2012)

Written by Michael Woods

Tuesday, 12 June 2012 13:39



Teofilo Stevenson was a damned fine heavyweight boxer, who became the first fighter in the Olympics to win gold in three Games, the '72, '76 and '80 editions. He may have been on par with Muhammad Ali, or, some maintain, a step up from The Greatest. But the world never got to answer that question, because the citizen of Cuba spurned the myriad attempts to lure him away from Fidel Castro, to the US, where an embarrassment of riches awaited him. Stevenson died on Monday, at age 60, from a heart attack, forever to remain in people's memory a skilled sportsman, and a most potent symbol of anti-capitalism.

"I will not leave my country for one million dollars or for much more than that," he said in 1974, to Sports Illustrated. "What is a million dollars against eight million Cubans who love me?"

Bob Surkein, head referee for the Games and a veteran of more than 30 years of refereeing amateur bouts at the time, put Stevenson up there with the top dogs.

"Stevenson is the best," he told SI. "Better than Foreman or Frazier and as good as Ali, but Ali fought as a light heavy in the Olympics. Stevenson has quick hands and he already moves almost as well as Ali—and he's bigger. He is a classic boxer, like all the Cubans. "

Teofilo Stevenson (1952-2012)

Written by Michael Woods
Tuesday, 12 June 2012 13:39

A crackerjack right hand was his money punch. His jab was fine, and one didn't see the hook all that much, but with that Hearn's-y length, Stevenson got great leverage on the right. The boxer, who mostly worked as a patient aggressor, maintained his balance well, and moved minimally, as he was comfortable fighting at close range.

I don't want to bring this news item into other territory, don't want to get into a debate of the merits and deficiencies of our system of capitalism and our nation's concept of freedom and the lack thereof in Cuba; but in an age where it seems like anyone and everything is up for bid, it is at the least interesting to remember that then, and even now, there are people who adhere to a different values system. Defenders of our nation, and people with even a passing knowledge of the tactics used to tamp down dissent in Cuba can point out that many a man was unable to exert freedom of choice, knowing that eyes were on them, and there would be ramifications if a Stevenson chose to jump ship, and head for the pot of gold in the States. But as the SI writer pointed out, Stevenson during this 1974 chat in Santo Domingo was not under surveillance or accompanied by handlers; he could have at the least indicated that he'd be open to defection.

Many promoters knew that an Ali-Stevenson showdown would be a bank-buster, not a mere prizefight, but a metaphorical clash of epic proportions. One athlete would prevail, and one nation could proudly point to that fighter, and their system of commerce and politics, and declare victory. A deal for an exhibition series, put together by Bob Arum, seemed to get near the finish line in 1978. Ali would be paid, and Stevenson's share would go to his nation. But the deal fizzled out, and Stevenson, with a mark of 302-22, left the arena in 1988. In January, according to the NY Times, Stevenson had a blot clot in an artery near his heart, and spent 15 days in intensive care. Will we ever truly know how he felt about the fact that he didn't get, or take the chance, to test himself against those known as the best, who were plying their trade for pay? Perhaps not; the lack of freedom of speech on his island likely means that his innermost thoughts, as well as well as the answer to who was better, he or Ali, will stay buried with him.

[Comment on this article](#)

Radam G says:

Wow! My deepest condolences! Holla!

deepwater says:

damn good boxer. communism and socialism always fail since the beginning of time. liberty is the truth. you do not need a central government control panel telling you what to eat, drink, and

Teofilo Stevenson (1952-2012)

Written by Michael Woods
Tuesday, 12 June 2012 13:39

live. you are free and have the ability to pursue your happiness but happiness is never guaranteed. if you hate capitalism then please go, or at least understand that we have not had a true capitalist system since the US government abdicated its power to the illegal Federal Reserve system. the future of the United States is the restoration of liberty. limited government and a strong monetary policy. cut all foreign aid and stay out of the affairs of countries like Syria, Libya, etc.