Dereck Chisora looks through a wire mesh fence. His eyes stare intently, but few would dare guess what thoughts go on behind them. A seven-foot high barricade has been erected to separate Chisora from David Haye at the press conference to announce their July 14th fight, and while it makes a good publicity tool, it can serve a practical purpose when Chisora is in the

spotlight. The untamed boldness that has made Chisora a heavyweight contender is habitually present; it cannot be caged and unleashed whenever he steps into the ring.

It was evident in Munich last February when he gave long-standing heavyweight titlist Vitali Klitschko his toughest fight since a defeat to Lennox Lewis in 2003. The same characteristic also saw Chisora slap Klitschko in the face during their weigh-in and subsequently spit water at the Ukrainian's brother Wladimir. Chisora's uncouth manner was highlighted by the Klitschkos' stoic reaction in the face of such disregard. A few hours later at the post-fight press conference, Chisora would confirm the extent of his instability when he jumped from the dais to confront Haye at the back of the room, resulting in a brawl that involved punches, beer bottles, camera tripods and threats from Chisora that he would "shoot" and "physically burn" Haye.

Doing an interview to hype Saturday's fight Chisora seems calm, sitting outdoors in a chair under the sun wearing large gold-rimmed shades, a black t-shirt and a baseball cap twisted to the side. With his 240 pound frame he would cut a menacing figure if there wasn't a small well-groomed Pomeranian dog resting peacefully on his lap. On Chisora's shirt is an image of Haye with the words "Ain't Toe Stopping Us Now", a reference to a toe injury Haye blamed for his loss to Wladimir Klitschko last year.

"I don't like Haye," states Chisora bluntly. "The reason why is because he's got cane rows [hairstyle]. That's why." There is no hint of a smile when he says this.

Chisora's tendency for atypical behavior is not a recent trend and has ranged from bemusing to repellent. He professes that his passion outside the ring lies with antiques. "I love them," says the Zimbabwe-born Londoner. "I like old-style English furniture but I love a special kind of antique like old style parking meters and red post boxes and phone boxes." But in 2010 some of his activities were less passive as he was convicted of assault. It was claimed that Chisora was looking through his sleeping then-girlfriend's phone when he discovered a message he believed to be from an admirer. Enraged, he struck her face and back, leaving multiple bruises. He received a suspended three-month prison sentence and 150 hours of community service.

He has shown he can be affectionate, but at inappropriate times, like when he kissed an opponent at a press conference and then bit another on the ear during a fight he was easily dominating. The foul went undetected at the time but thanks to video footage he was later suspended for four months. Chisora said in his explanation: "I was bored stiff. I thought I'd liven things up a little bit. Would I do it again? I'd probably bite it off next time."

Chisora, 28, doesn't seem too concerned about causing offense. "I'm a rude person," he said in 2010 when describing his difficulties with women. "But men are hunters. We look. We like. We approach. Women don't like the fact I do it with a swagger. They don't like me walking into the room like I got a million dollars in my pocket, when I ain't. But as a boxer you need that swagger."

At his London gym Chisora prowls around the gym floor. With hands wrapped and ready for action, he rotates his shoulders slowly. Suddenly he jolts into life, leaping onto the ring apron and diving over the ropes. Landing unsteadily on his feet, a wide smile breaks out across his face; cheerfulness accentuated by his bright white mouthguard. There's little evidence of swagger as Chisora laughs and makes jokes inside the ring. There is a youthful quality to his easy-going nature; inside the ropes he is allowed to be himself, encouraged to do what he is good at and free from the insecurities of obliging an image.

Chisora wasn't always this comfortable in the ring. Having arrived in London from Africa at 16 to be with his mother, he struggled to adapt to his new surroundings and after quickly dropping out of school became friends with a group of what he labels "bad boys". Their activities saw him regularly fall foul of the law and eventually his probation officer decided that the local boxing club would be a suitable place for Chisora to spend his time. The arrangement didn't seem like it would be an instant success.

"In my first spar I got hit by a bad jab," recalls Chisora. "It smacked me in the nose and brought tears to my eyes. I walked out of the ring but my trainer said: 'What are you doing? Get back in. This is boxing.' So I did. And here I am."

Over the next 10 years Chisora developed a bond with that trainer, Don Charles, a man who has attempted to fill the paternal void in the young man's life. It's a common occurrence in boxing when vulnerable youth find solace in the sport and are effectively adopted by trainers who witness the raw psyche of their charges better than any family member could.

"I'm like a father to him," says Charles, a usually genial middle-aged man who was so incensed at Haye punching Chisora in Munich that he leapt to his fighter's defense and chased Haye around the room, in the process being struck by a few right hands from the former heavyweight titlist. Charles firmly believes Chisora's ill-discipline stems from the lack of a family structure.

“There is no father around, Dereck’s the man in his house so he finds it very hard to take instructions from another man. There is definitely a problem there.”

It is a circumstance that is not unique to Chisora, with recent statistics showing that almost half of black families in Great Britain are single-parent. The issue received extensive media coverage last summer when the police shooting of a black man sparked five days of widespread rioting throughout England, leading numerous high-profile commentators to cite social issues in the Afro-Caribbean population as catalysts for the unrest [in spite of statistics showing that a higher number of people charged with rioting offenses were white]. In February Chisora was given a significant platform to represent his community in a positive light and generate an upbeat redemption story, but his behavior was analogous to the rioters, resulting in his standing being irreparably damaged. “Public figures like Dereck Chisora do not only perpetuate society’s stereotype of black males as violent and out of control, they also ‘train’ young black males to ‘perform blackness’ or what they think it means to be black,” wrote Michael Mumisa in The Independent. “If seasoned professional boxers appear to be failing to benefit from the self-discipline we are often told can be achieved through boxing it is hard to see how young people will.”

While his role-model status may be diminished, Chisora’s prizefighting career has been enhanced generously with the mainstream attention his public belligerence received helping sell 30,000 tickets for Saturday’s fight at the Upton Park soccer stadium. Without the Munich brawl, a fight with Haye would have been a less attractive promotion as both fighters are coming off defeats and Chisora has lost three of his last four outings, bringing his record to 15-3.

Chisora’s actions in Munich resulted in an indefinite suspension from the British Boxing Board of Control (BBBC), but promoter Frank Warren was so desperate to make Saturday’s fight that he found a loophole, thus allowing the event to proceed with licensing only from the Luxembourg Boxing Federation. The BBBC has threatened to censure anyone involved in the promotion, but Warren has responded by launching a lawsuit that claims intimidation by the organization. At the press conference to announce the fight Warren attempted to depict Chisora as a figure worthy of sympathy. “[Chisora] has lost half of his purse [for the Klitschko fight] in sanctions and costs,” said Warren. “He has no qualifications, the next thing for him to do would be to sign on [for unemployment allowance].”

It is unlikely that Warren would be motivated to risk so much in defending Chisora if the fighter had handled himself like an exemplar sportsman and kept his profile confined to the sports pages. Professional boxing, as former titlist Frank Bruno once said, “is show business with blood.” The sport that gave Chisora direction in life now seems to be exploiting failings in his

character, sending a circuitous message that he is being rewarded for thuggish conduct. Haye has implied that this notion is not lost on Chisora. “I’ve known Dereck for years and he was always a bit off the wall but now I think the penny has dropped with him,” says Haye. “He thinks ‘OK, I’ve just got to be a lunatic, people will realize I’m mad and people will want to see me.”

News broke last week of an incident that makes Chisora seem little different from the wayward youth that entered Don Charles’ gym a decade ago. During a sparring session he reportedly demanded that Charles remove his head gear, leading to a physical altercation between trainer and fighter. “I won’t go into the details as to why he wanted his head gear off,” Charles told BoxNation. “There’s a way to tell someone something and it’s called respect. I’m a human being with emotions so don’t disrespect me. I will not tolerate it. My mother and father don’t talk to me like that and certainly not someone I’ve helped for 10 years to become the boxer he is. It’s the worst thing that’s happened since I’ve been with him.”

The incident has generated more media attention and will boost Saturday’s revenue, but only Chisora knows whether the fracture in his relationship with Charles is a genuine grievance or symptomatic of an event built upon subversive behavior.

Regardless, Chisora doesn’t see anything wrong with a negative portrayal of the fight. “People like freak shows,” he insists. “If they want to watch the fight, let them watch. We don’t care.”

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Radam G says:

Chisora and Haye are ___ ___ ___ ___ ___! I'm hoping for a double KAYO! Holla!