

## Looking Back At Ali-Frazier II, and the Studio Brawl

Written by Frank Lotierzo

Tuesday, 28 January 2014 10:43

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It was January 17th 1974, which incidentally was Muhammad Ali's 32nd birthday. Joe Frazier had turned 30 five days earlier. The show actually aired on January 24th, four days before their rematch on the 28th. Eleven days before they met for a second time, Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier were guests on the Dick Cavett show, which aired on ABC. The show opened with Cavett going to Ali's training camp in Deer Lake, PA and watching him train for his upcoming rematch with Joe Frazier.

During the filming that Cavett aired, Ali excoriates Frazier in every demeaning way possible. You know the Ali routine - he goes into how Joe has no style, he's dumb and can't talk, how Joe has nothing but a hard head and a left-hook. Ali comes off as very being very dismissive and even funny, as long as you're not Joe Frazier.

After 10-12 minutes of B-roll footage with Ali, they switch to Frazier's training camp in Philadelphia, PA. Mike Parkinson, a popular BBC host, is covering Frazier. What can be said about Joe other than he's a true fighter and is only interested in getting the job done, which is beating Ali again. Frazier is not dismissive of Ali and promises that the rematch will be nothing more than a repeat of the first fight, except it might not go the distance. Incidentally, the Frazier B-roll footage is no more than six minutes.

When the footage of both fighters training concludes, Cavett and Parkinson discuss their experiences at both fighters camps and compare and contrast both men as to their approach to fighting and training. Then Cavett says the last time my next two guest met this is what happened, and highlights of the first clash between Joe and Muhammad appears on the screen. When the highlight ends Cavett introduces Ali and then Frazier as they walk down to the stage from different entrances. Ali and Frazier slap each other five and then sit with Ali on the far left, with Cavett next to him and Parkinson next to Frazier, who is seated on the far right. Cavett moderates most of the discussion with Parkinson occasionally adding his thoughts and asking each fighter pointed questions about the other. The topics covered vary and range from, would you allow your son to box and what does each fighter do to try and conserve energy being that the country is right in the midst of the energy crisis of the early to mid 1970s. At this time George Foreman is the undefeated and undisputed heavyweight champion of the world and both fighters confirm that their rematch is just a stepping stone in order for them to get a shot at Foreman and the title.

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During the hour that Muhammad and Joe are the focal point of the show, Ali goes out of his way to demean Frazier and all that he's accomplished as a man and professional fighter. He belittles everything Joe says and aggressively and passive aggressively goes out of his way to get a reaction from Joe. Frazier is very measured in his response and basically says that he'll do his talking in the ring on the 28th of January. However, it doesn't take much to see that Frazier is seething inside and would've been happy to settle the dispute right there.

When the filming of the show concluded Frazier left in a haste and vowed that he would not interact with Ali until they were at center ring on the night of the fight, a vow that Joe had to break because they were obligated to sit with Howard Cosell on the Wide World of Sports the Saturday afternoon before the fight to watch a replay of their first fight on March 8th, 1971. This was an appearance that Frazier was hellbent on getting out of because he didn't want to be subjected to Ali's words and antics again before the fight. When all was said and done, Joe capitulated to Cosell. What happened was Cosell promised Frazier that he would sit between he and Ali and that he wouldn't let Ali talk about race, religion, politics or whatever else wandered into Ali's mind. Cosell was adamant to Frazier that he could keep the discussion on boxing and what happened during their first fight and what will happen this coming Monday night. Frazier gave in and agreed to sit on the same platform as Ali one more time due to him trusting Cosell to keep the conversation on boxing.

Heading into the Wide World of Sports show Frazier was looking to get at Ali this time and didn't really trust Cosell. Joe was certain that Howard favored Ali and would lose control once Ali started his expected routine. So on January 26th Ali and Frazier appeared on ABC's Wide World of Sports to review the tape of their first fight, which was being aired for the very first time on home TV. Before the show started Joe's hostility towards Ali and Cosell escalated because Howard had already broken his first promise - that being he would sit between both fighters. As it turned out, Ali was seated on the far left with Joe being sandwiched in the middle between Ali and Cosell, who sat on the far right. For the first nine and a half rounds of the broadcast, it was Frazier who took a few more shots at Ali instead of the expected opposite. As most boxing fans know Ali went to the hospital immediately after the first fight to get his jaw x-rayed, and then was released when they came back negative. Conversely, on Tuesday, March 16, 1971 Joe Frazier was admitted to St. Luke's Children Medical Center in Philadelphia. Frazier had been feeling weak, and his blood pressure had escalated. Also, Joe was experiencing 'flu-like' symptoms. Eight days later Frazier was released and given a clean bill of health.

During the viewing of the 10th round Frazier brought up the fact that it was he, Ali, who went to the hospital after the fight, a comment that set Ali back and he retaliated saying basically that he was in and out of the hospital in 10 minutes for x-rays. He then continued, saying it was you,

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Joe, who was in and out of intensive care for two weeks. Ali then says to Cosell can you believe he's even gonna bring up who went to the hospital, that just shows how dumb and "ignorant" he is. To which Frazier says, "Why you say I'm ignorant?" And with that Frazier took off his head set and got up, saying to Ali, "Why you think I'm Ignorant"?

As Frazier stood over Ali asking why he thought he was ignorant, Ali said sit down Joe in a somewhat diversionary manner. At this time Ali's younger brother Rahman walked towards Frazier and Joe asked if he was in this too. With that Ali yelled "Quick Joe" and jumped up and grabbed him around the neck as he pulled him down to the floor. The fighters were quickly pulled apart with Frazier leaving the studio, saying I'll see you Monday night with Ali retorting, "You be there."

It's funny because of all the sh\*t Ali talked, especially to Frazier, it was Joe who actually drew the first blood when he said Ali went to the hospital after their first fight. And that was because of the treatment Frazier was subjected to by Ali during the taping of the Dick Cavett show. Yes, it was Frazier who went into the Wide World of Sports broadcast looking for the confrontation with Ali which was actually a roll reversal on the part of both fighters.

Ali stayed and finished the broadcast with Cosell but it wasn't the same without Frazier there even though Cosell did his best to speak on behalf of Joe. The next day both Ali and Frazier were fined \$5000.00 dollars apiece for their conduct by the New York state athletic commission.

Two days later Ali won a very quick paced fight via a 12-round unanimous decision (6-5-1) (8-4) (7-4-1). For the rematch Ali weighed 212, three pounds lighter than he was for their first fight and Frazier was four pounds heavier at 209.

The fight is the least regarded of the three epic meetings between Ali and Frazier, although today a heavyweight bout contested at that pace would be deemed an instant classic the next day.

Today, 40 years later Ali-Frazier II is best remembered by some for the studio brawl that erupted two days before the bout. Some suggested at the time that the studio brawl was a hoax and just a ploy to hype the fight. To those who felt that way then or think that way now, you couldn't be more wrong. Joe Frazier was no actor. He was sick and tired of Ali's mouth leading

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up to and after their first bout. Frazier felt that Ali's personality and bravado robbed him out of his just due for kicking his butt the first time they met. Ali had convinced everyone in the two and a half years after their 1971 fight, that it was he, not Frazier, who actually won, something that couldn't be further from the truth. Joe knew that he conclusively beat Ali in their only fight to date at that time and never received his due props.

When he went to the ABC studio on January 26th 1974, Frazier was looking to confront Ali in a big way. And when Muhammad called him ignorant, that was all he needed. The studio brawl between Ali and Frazier in January 1974 was real on Frazier's part. Ali just did what he always does, he took chicken sh\*t and made it chicken stew.

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{youtube}maA4QACDXOY{/youtube}

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### **Radam G says:**

OMG! Superscribe F Lo, WOW! That must have been some nasty, smelly chicken stew. But GOAT Ali was a legit magician. A lot of people don't know that. The GOAT was a fighter, a lover, a poet, a human rights advocate and a magician.

Boxers have so much intelligence, talent and education that haters, stereotypers and posers couldn't imagine. Holla!

### **amayseng says:**

[B]"Yes, it was Frazier who went into the Wide World of Sports broadcast looking for the confrontation with Ali which was actually a roll reversal on the part of both fighters."

[/B]

I disagree I think Frazier went to the broadcast fed the \*\*\*\* up with Ali and his verbal assault.

Each man has a boiling point and Ali could talk enough to send a man into a frenzy.

This reminds me of myself and a big mouth bully I had to deal with in 9th grade. He ridiculed me for days

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and days and one day I snapped, hit him 4 times until I realized I was hitting him. I still dont remember it

witness's have told me what I did.

Frazier, like myself or anyone else can only take so much. Poor Frazier took his spite of Ali to his grave.

**amayseng says:**

Btw, this was a great read, did not mean to demean it just relate to it...