

Sports

Biggest fight has Haley tongue-tied

By Royce Feour
Staff Writer

Nevada junior welterweight champion Leroy Haley of Las Vegas has seemingly matured as both a fighter and a person at the age of 28.

Haley became known for his bragging and speech-making in the ring after fights, mostly at the Silver Slipper, but it was a low-key Haley who spoke Wednesday of the biggest fight of his eight-year professional career.

The Rancho High School graduate meets Willie Rodriguez of Allentown, Pa., Saturday night for the vacant North American Boxing Federation super lightweight championship on the undercard of the Larry Holmes-Trevor Berbick fight at the Caesars Palace Sports Pavilion.

"I still pop off, only now I do it after a win and not before," Haley said before a training session at Johnny Tocco's Ringside Gym. "People don't believe what you say, no how. After you prove it, you can't help but believe it because the facts are there."

The scheduled 12-rounder between Haley and Rodriguez will be a rematch. Rodriguez, fighting in his hometown of Allentown, stopped Haley in the 12th round Feb. 2, 1979.

Rodriguez is the U.S. Boxing Association junior welterweight champion, but that title won't be on the line Saturday.

The junior welterweight and super lightweight divisions amount to the same thing, with a 140-pound limit.

Reflecting on his maturity, Haley said, "The most important thing I learned is to respect people I work with. If I'm going to pay them, I may as well listen to



LERROY HALEY
... seeking NABF crown

them. I try to concentrate more than I used to. I also respect my opponents until a decision is rendered or the count is finished."

The loss to Rodriguez was only the second in Haley's professional career. His only other defeat was an eight-round decision to the late Roy Holloway back in 1975. Haley also holds an eight-

round decision victory over Holloway.

Haley will take a 43-2-2 record (with one "no contest") into Saturday's fight. However, almost all of Haley's fights have been in Las Vegas.

Don King Productions, Inc., matchmaker Bobby Goodman said he had offered the NABF's No. 1 super lightweight contender, Monroe Brooks of Los Angeles, a fight with Saturday's winner, Rodriguez, who has a 23-6 record, is ranked No. 4, while Haley is No. 5. Goodman said he originally tried to make a Brooks-Haley fight for Saturday.

Reflecting on his loss to Rodriguez, Haley said, "I think I was complacent in Pennsylvania. I hadn't been beaten in three and one-half years and had never been beaten convincingly. I thought that all I had to do was get in the ring, go the distance, get the decision and go home. I was my own worst enemy that night."

Since that fight Haley fought to a four-round technical draw with Modesto Concepcion and racked up six straight victories, including defending his State junior welterweight crown twice.

Haley went to Honolulu in February for a fight with local island hero Mark Ibanez, but Haley said the bout was cancelled because Ibanez was sick.

Haley was inactive most of last year because of a whiplash and spine injuries suffered in an auto accident and had only one fight in 1980—a 12-round decision over Rosendo Ramon Oct. 15.

Haley said he asked for a doctor's release to resume fighting because, "I knew if I stayed out a whole year I would never come back."

A native of Garland City, Ark., Haley moved to Las Vegas in 1970 and was graduated from Rancho in 1971.

He took up boxing

after watching some film clips of the local Golden Gloves tournament in 1971.

"I saw the Golden Gloves on TV and thought I could beat all those guys I saw fight. I went to the gym the next day," Haley says.

He trained at the basement gym under the Thbrobred Lounge on the Strip, won a Golden Gloves novice title in 1972 and then won a Regional championship in 1973, advancing to the semifinals in the National Golden Gloves tournament in the 139-pound division.

Haley turned professional in January of 1973, winning a six-round decision over Carlos Gonzalez on the late promoter Bill Miller's "Strip Fight of the Week" card.

He spent most of his early pro training under the guidance of trainer Mickey Parks in Henderson. Parks died of cancer in 1975.

Haley said, "Joey Maxim told me the other night he was the best teacher he had ever known. To me, he was one of the best defensive trainers I ever worked with. He didn't involve the right hand in the offense that much because he said you're not supposed to be able to hit a man with the right hand."

Haley feels he is an improved fighter over the brash boxer who lost to Rodriguez 26 months ago.

"Now I think I am a fighter who can do everything," Haley said. Before, I couldn't fight inside that well. I could just box. Now I can do it all."

Asked what he had to do differently to beat Rodriguez this time, Haley said, "Nothing. Don't be clowning. Fight."

NBA playoffs

By The Associated Press
All Times PST
FIRST ROUND
Best of Three
Eastern Conference
Tuesday, March 31
Philadelphia 124, Indiana 108
Chicago 90, New York 80
Thursday, April 2
Philadelphia 96, Indiana 85, Philadelphia wins series 2-0
Friday, April 3
Chicago 115, New York 114, OT, Chicago wins series 2-0

Western Conference
Wednesday, April 1
Houston 111, Los Angeles 107
Kansas City 98, Portland 97, OT
Friday, April 3
Portland 124, Kansas City 119, OT
Los Angeles 111, Houston 106
Sunday, April 5
Houston 89, Los Angeles 86, Houston wins series 2-1
Kansas City 104, Portland 95, Kansas City wins series 2-1

Sunday's Games
Philadelphia at Milwaukee, 10:05 a.m.
Boston at Chicago, 10:05 a.m.
Wednesday, April 15
Chicago at Boston, 4:35 p.m., if necessary
Milwaukee at Philadelphia, 5:05 p.m.
Friday, April 17
Philadelphia at Milwaukee, TBA, if necessary
Boston at Chicago, TBA, if necessary
Sunday, April 19
Milwaukee at Philadelphia, 10:05 a.m., if necessary
Chicago at Boston, 10:05 a.m., if necessary

Tuesday, April 14
Houston at San Antonio, 5:05 p.m.
Wednesday, April 15
San Antonio at Houston, TBA, if necessary
Kansas City at Phoenix, TBA
Friday, April 17
Houston at San Antonio, TBA, if necessary
Phoenix at Kansas City, 5:05 p.m., if necessary
Sunday, April 19
Kansas City at Phoenix, 12:35 p.m., if necessary

NOTE: Boston, Milwaukee, San Antonio and Phoenix had first-round byes.
Spurs, 125-113
HOUSTON (112)
Malone 9-24-21, Reid 8-35-19, Paultz 5-34-13, Henderson 1-0-2, Dunleavy 6-0-12, Murphy 15-33-34, Willoughby 1-2-4, Jones 1-0-2, Leavell 2-2-6, Totals 48 16-20 112.
SAN ANTONIO (125)
R. Johnson 5-4-5 14, Oberding 14-6-6 34, G. Johnson 3-0-6, Silas 2-2-4, Gervin 9-6-24, Griffin 4-0-8, Moore 3-0-6, Brewer 8-5-21, Corzine 2-0-4, Wiley 0-2-2, Restani 0-0-0, Totals 50 25-32 125.

NFL Monday night schedule

By The Associated Press
NEW YORK (AP) — The National Football League's schedule of regular-season Monday night games to be televised nationally by ABC (all games start 6 p.m. PST):
Sept. 7: San Diego at Cleveland
Sept. 14: Oakland at Minnesota
Sept. 21: Dallas at New England
Sept. 28: Los Angeles at Chicago
Oct. 5: Atlanta at Buffalo
Oct. 19: Miami at Detroit
Oct. 26: Houston at Pittsburgh
Nov. 2: Minnesota at Denver
Nov. 9: Buffalo at Dallas
Nov. 16: San Diego at Seattle
Nov. 23: Minnesota at Atlanta
Nov. 30: Philadelphia at Miami
Dec. 7: Pittsburgh at Oakland
Dec. 14: Atlanta at Los Angeles
Dec. 21: Oakland at San Diego