

## SPORTS

## Seeing is disbelieving—recent fights lack luster

Usually in the finals of a marathon, the witnesses expect the climax of the event to have the most thrilling moments as the participants attempt to give the best "performance" in accomplishing their goals.

The end of the boxing marathon that started more than four weeks ago, in this, the heralded center of pugilism, should have had a much better finale than the heavyweight title bout that took place at the Mandalay Bay Events Center last Saturday night.

World Boxing Council heavyweight title holder Vitali Klitschko defended his two belts with a technical knockout over Danny Williams in the eighth round against this opponent whose opposition amounted to nothing more than a 270 pound punching bag.

To many boxing aficionados—and some who weren't even considered expert—this one-sided match was the worst title bout that occurred during the weeks of outstanding championship bouts that ranged from mini-weight all the way to heavyweight.



## SPORTS PACE

By Huel Washington

Starting with the battle between Ronald "Winky" Wright and Shane Mosley on November 20 for the world super welterweight championship, and the following week Erik Morales met Marco Antonio Barrera for the super featherweight title, the competition was so competitive there was talk of naming each bout the "fight of the year."

A week later, Joel Casamayor and Jose Luis Castillo waged another outstanding bout for the world lightweight championship that also had the spectators rooting loudly and on the edge of their seats.

So with all the prefight publicity given the big boys, especially Williams' seemingly easy annihilation of "Iron Mike" Tyson earlier in the year, his challenge of WBC champion Klitschko, who had also been given the

Ring Magazine belt as the "real" heavyweight champion, the final bout of the title marathon was to be the best of all.

Instead, it turned out to be the worst. Klitschko pounded Williams unmercifully from the opening bell until the middle of the eighth when referee Jay Nady, who had been talking to the ring doctors between each round, called a halt to the slaughter.

Klitschko landed 296 punches out of the 519 he threw and so many of them were on Williams head that the champion had to go to the hospital for x-rays of his hands to see if they were broken. They weren't, only badly swollen.

Standing six feet seven inches to Williams six feet one, Klitschko used his height to a great advantage against an opponent who only plodded in to be pummeled re-

lentlessly. Williams didn't bob or weave the way most fighters do when their opponents have a height advantage.

Many years ago, when Joe Louis was the heavyweight title holder, two of his opponents, Arturo Godoy and Tommy Farr, each crouched low and stayed 15 rounds in the championship fight. Louis won but by decision.

Williams had practically no defense against Klitschko. Of the 193 punches he threw at Klitschko only 44 connected in seven and a half rounds.

He claimed after taking the terrible beating that he had studied the bouts of former heavyweight champion Rocky Marciano. That may have true but he didn't learn about the Marciano's tactic of hitting his opponents on the arms and in the chest when he couldn't reach their heads.

Of the 96 jabs, according to Compubox statistics, Williams only connected on six of his attempts to jab his opponent. Of 97 power shots

thrown only 38 connected. In contrast, Klitschko threw 283 power punches and connected on 197.

Klitschko knocked Williams down in the first, third, seventh and eighth rounds. On his return from the hospital, Klitschko marveled at the amount of punishment Williams was able to endure.

And while he was calling this victory his "best performance," others were shaking their heads in disbelief.

In the audience watching the mismatch were IBF heavyweight champion Chris Byrd, former WBC champion Hasim Rahman, Lamon Brewster, the WBO champion and Jameel McCline, who were all disappointed with the evenings proceedings and were anxious to try their hands against the WBC champion.

They each said they would have done much better than Williams, who is from England. "Let's see what he will do against an American."

Byrd, who now lives in Las Vegas and has built a training facility in his garage,

has a win over Klitschko and would like to fight him again.

Also at ringside was promoter Don King, who spoke with the some of the television executives about a tournament to unify the heavyweight division once again, instead of the four champions, WBC, IBF, WBA, and WBO.

Klitschko, who has been called "Dr. Iron Fist" said, "I feel I am the real heavyweight champion and am willing to fight anyone."

From the performance he put on against Williams and couldn't knock out a poor defenseless challenger with limited skills, anyone will probably fight him. Who's next?

"Iron Mike" Tyson has been training again, and Klitschko, who earned about \$3.5 million for this latest fight and stated he wanted Tyson, may get his chance.

As Don King says, "Be careful what you wish for, you just might get it." That might get the crowd's attention. It would certainly be better than last week's fiasco.

## Malone apologizes to Bryant

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Another Kobe conflict for the Lakers. Bryant has accused Karl Malone of making a pass at his wife at a game last month.

Talking before Los Angeles' 105-98 win over Orlando on Sunday night, Bryant said he felt betrayed by a man he considered a friend.

"He was like a mentor, like a brother to me, so when something like that happens, you're upset, you're hurt," Bryant said.

He said he called Malone and told him, "Stay away from my wife. What's wrong with you? How could you?"

Malone was not available for comment Sunday, but agent Dwight Manley said Malone told him he had never made a pass at Bryant's wife, that he was surprised by the accusation, and that he then apologized to both Bryant and his wife for any remarks she might have considered inappropriate.

"Karl's response to Kobe's comments today is that he's a basketball player and not a soap opera actor and he doesn't intend to be involved in a personal soap opera," Manley said of his client.

Bryant said he had phoned Malone, who has a home near Bryant's in Newport Beach, after Bryant's wife, Vanessa, told him on Nov. 23 that Malone had made inappropriate comments to her that night at Staples Center.

"The comments that he said, I don't know any man in this room that wouldn't be upset about that," Bryant said in the Lakers' locker room. "The past month, myself, my wife, (Malone's wife) Kaye, we've had fun together.

"We've been out to their house, just joking

around, giving each other a hard time, just clowning, being sarcastic with one another, baby-sitting kids and all that."

Asked if there might have been a misunderstanding, Bryant said, "What he said is what he said. I believe in my heart that it wasn't a misunderstanding.

"My wife wasn't going to stand for it. She felt uncomfortable being around him to the point that she felt she had to call his wife and tell her."

Bryant said Malone didn't deny making the comments, and told him during their phone conversation, "Aw, you know, I'm sorry if I said anything that was out of line."

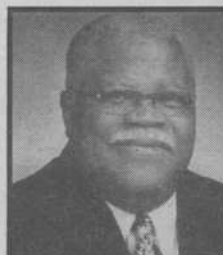
Malone, 41, told the Lakers on Oct. 1 he was still recovering from arthroscopic surgery he underwent three months earlier on his right knee and wasn't ready to play. But he didn't rule out returning at some point this season or beyond. He apparently is ready to play again, but for whom is the question.

Manley said last Tuesday that Malone didn't plan to return to the Lakers because of comments Bryant made in a radio interview. Bryant had said the Lakers shouldn't have to look over their shoulders, wondering whether Malone was going to rejoin the team.

According to Manley, Malone was furious at Bryant, and that private, personal attacks were involved, but the agent would not elaborate.

Bryant, who in the past had a string of public feuds with Shaquille O'Neal and also some run-ins with coach Phil Jackson, certainly did elaborate on his side of the conflict

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By  
Reg Weaver,  
President,  
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Parents and Teachers:  
Making the Difference

The end of the year is a time of reflection and renewal. For those of us who work in America's public schools—and work with the women and men who have dedicated their lives to helping students succeed in school and in life—it's a time to assess what we have accomplished and what we can do better.

Since 1857, the National Education Association has worked to make public schools great for every child. We support equity and adequacy in the distribution of resources that support those things that work in the classroom—qualified teachers, smaller classes, and up-to-date books, materials aligned with high standards and shared accountability.

We will continue to focus our energies on getting students what they need—with the support of parents, partners in the community, and policymakers. But, increasingly, we understand that teachers and education support professionals can't go it alone. Students spend about 9 percent of their time in school. For our young people to succeed, we also need to pay attention to the other 91 percent of their time.

Recent polling for *Phi Delta Kappan* magazine shows that parents and others understand instinctively what research confirms. Parental involvement and student motivation are key elements to whether or not a child succeeds in school. There's no time for philosophical discussions or squabbles about who should take responsibility for taking the first step. The key to helping students is communications—ongoing, frequent and respectful conversations between teachers and parents about student needs and progress—in good times and in bad.

I say respectful communications because both teachers and parents need to understand the unique role the other plays in students' growth and development. No teacher wants to usurp the role of parents. We look for a partnership role, working together to reinforce values like hard work, respect and personal responsibility. In the same way, parents should understand that teachers' knowledge and experience can be a resource for them. Teachers and education support professionals work with children every day, and they can provide useful insights in helping parents support and encourage their children.

In 2005, NEA members will be reaching out to parents more than ever before. Working together, I know we can help all students meet high standards—and the challenges that face our nation in the years ahead.

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NEA's 2.7 million members are the nation's leading advocates for children and public education