

Mayweather eyes busy 2006 schedule

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) - A few days before his welterweight debut, Floyd Mayweather Jr. complained that many top boxers don't want to fight him.

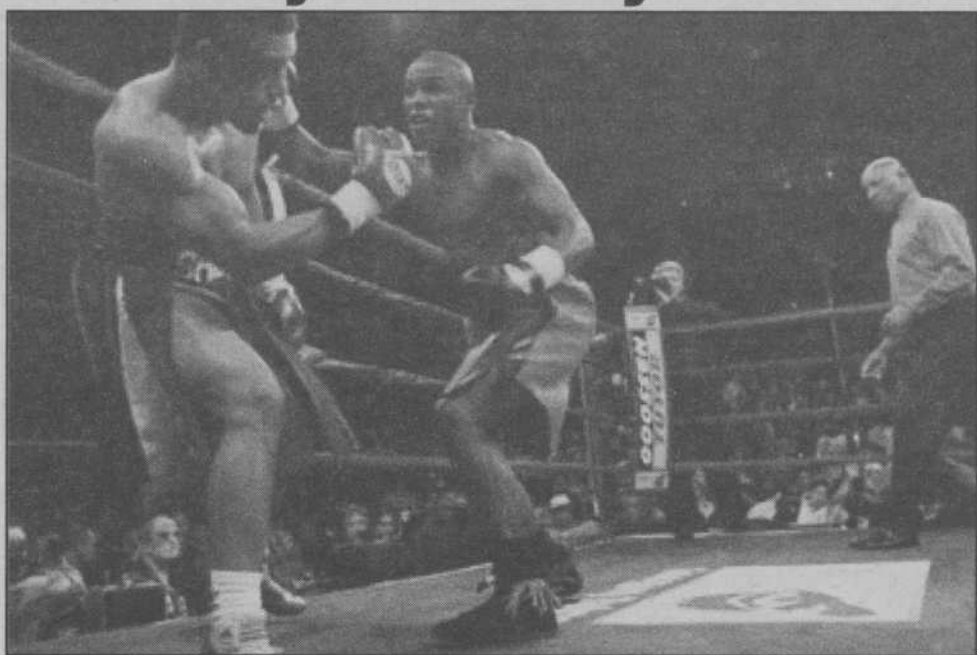
After scoring a sixth-round TKO over Shamba Mitchell on Saturday, Mayweather said he wanted to fight three or four times in 2006, but he wasn't going to call out any particular fighter.

When pressed, however, he did have some financial advice for Zab Judah, the welterweight champion.

"Zab needs me so he can become a millionaire," Mayweather said. "If Zab don't fight Floyd Mayweather, he'll never be a millionaire."

Judah may not want the money after watching Mayweather rout Mitchell, the savvy left-hander who entered the Rose Garden with a 56-4 record and left with his second knockout loss in three outings.

Displaying the hand speed and superior defense that are his trademarks, Mayweather ended the non-title bout with a straight right hand that landed below



Floyd Mayweather Jr., right, gets Shamba Mitchell up against the ropes during the third round of their welterweight bout inside the Rose Garden on Saturday in Portland, Ore.

Mitchell's rib cage. Referee Richard Steele counted to nine before ending the fight with Mitchell sitting on the ropes. Mitchell complained that Steele stopped the fight too soon.

With the win, Mayweather strengthened his claim to be the best fighter in any weight class, the pound-for-pound champion. The 28-year-old Michigan native, who has won belts at three lower weight classes, said he won't

duck anyone. "Floyd Mayweather don't have no excuses. Floyd Mayweather will fight anyone."

Undefeated in 35 fights, Mayweather was in control from the start, landing right hands with ease. He absorbed little punishment from Mitchell, a former 140-pound champion who was making his second appearance as a welterweight.

Mayweather won every round on the judges'

scorecards and landed 85 punches to Mitchell's 31. The vast majority of the punches Mayweather landed were power shots, and the knockout was the 24th of his career.

Mayweather, who fought at 126 pounds in the 1996 Olympics, said weight divisions don't matter much if you have talent. He said he felt good at 147 and he thought his body looked good, too.

Mitchell, who weighed in at 145 pounds, was active throughout the fight, but his jab couldn't penetrate Mayweather's defense. Toward the end of the opening round, Mayweather combined a hard right with a left hook that had Mitchell grasping for his opponent's waist. The second round was Mitchell's best. At the end of it, he threw a left that sent Mayweather to the ropes. It couldn't salvage the round.

Mayweather used a straight right to send the 35-year-old Mitchell to the canvas in the third. He kept the pressure on in the fourth, teeing off on Mitchell, who had his elbows pressed to his ribs and his hands in front of his face to block a flurry of blows.

Mayweather said he decided to fight Mitchell after potential bouts with a host of bigger-name fighters couldn't be negotiated. The WBC 140-pound champion could return to that weight to face IBF champion Ricky Hatton, or he could stay at 147 and challenge Judah. He could also press for lucrative fights against Oscar De La Hoya and Shane Mosley.



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