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# Once Again, Mayweather Wins Lots of Money but Little Love

By GREG BISHOP

LAS VEGAS

Late Saturday, in a news conference bizarre even by boxing's standards, it seemed as if [Floyd Mayweather Jr.](#) was campaigning for an unofficial championship to add to his copious title belts: least likable star in sports.

He walked onstage wearing orange-tinted sunglasses, at night, indoors. He referred to himself in the third person more than a dozen times. He cried, too, and thanked God before calling for HBO's 80-year-old boxing analyst, Larry Merchant, the same guy Mayweather swore at in the ring, to be fired.

Mayweather cannot help himself. He is perhaps the best boxer of his generation, one who displayed his ring brilliance again throughout his latest lopsided victory, [a fourth-round knockout](#) of Victor Ortiz, earlier Saturday night. Yet for all his words, the stream — and lack — of consciousness never stops.

Mayweather is right about one thing: he does not get his due. The only thing Mayweather talks about more than the money he flashes with cartoonish zeal is the disrespect he believes comes his way in similar abundance.

Here is what his cadre of enablers does not have the heart to tell him: Mayweather arrived there largely through his own design.

Take Saturday night. Ortiz launched himself into Mayweather with an egregious head butt. As Ortiz continued his excessive apology, the referee Joe Cortez signaled time back in, and Mayweather caught his opponent off guard with two legal, lethal punches that floored him.

The crowd booed Mayweather for the ending, but had it been anyone other than Mayweather who obtained victory that way, the reaction would have been far less vitriolic. Ortiz, with three intentional head butts, deserved far more criticism for what happened in the ring. But Mayweather bore the brunt of it. Again.

The only current athlete who draws a similar amount of hatred is the N.B.A. star LeBron James, but that's not really an accurate comparison, because James seems to incite fury without meaning to. The better analogue for Mayweather is Barry Bonds, without the steroid allegations. Both are historically elite athletes whose accomplishments are, and will continue to be, overshadowed by public perception. Both seemed to be liked less as their careers unfolded.

Mayweather insisted Saturday that he did not care about the boos, about his legacy, about the way people perceive him. A friend, the rapper 50 Cent, said the sporting public so disliked Mayweather because he was young, he was rich and he was “part of a pop culture that people feel shouldn’t be so visible.”

50 Cent added: “If you don’t know the difference between reality and entertainment, there’s a place for you. It’s called a mental institution.”

Fair enough, but Mayweather seems to have trouble making the distinction himself. He once made a professional wrestling cameo, and he readily admits the villain he has grown into is a character he invented. He talks trash with an unmitigated and angry flourish. He flashes money like a spoiled trust-fund kid. Still, Mayweather is not a typical heel who cares not what others think. He is fueled by slights perceived, real and imagined.

He says he does not read anything written about him. Then he says the news media hate him for no reason. He says he doesn’t think about Manny Pacquiao, the other candidate for pound-for-pound king and the other half of the superfight everyone wants to see. Then he makes every interview about Pacquiao, without prompting, intimating Pacquiao won’t take a blood test, which Pacquiao already agreed to. If Mayweather is a villain, he is a sensitive one.

He should be beloved. He is undefeated, 42-0, technically superior to any boxer in recent memory and the sport’s undisputed pay-per-view king. He earns roughly \$40 million each fight [under a financial structure](#) that should be the envy of all athletes. He is, as he will tell anyone who listens, a fighter who should be recognized as one of boxing’s best ever.

“He’ll never get his full recognition,” said Paulie Malignaggi, once a world champion. “I wish he would just retire. People aren’t going to be happy until he gets beat.”

Malignaggi sat to the side at the news conference, perhaps the only pro-Mayweather space in town. Mayweather’s acolytes applauded everything he said. Fans tossed compliments posed as questions. Two nearly came to blows. One anti-Mayweather fan “journalist” was expelled. This was Mayweather’s cocoon from the boos showered upon him earlier.

“People just hate him, man,” said Malignaggi, who says he personally likes Mayweather but understands why others don’t. “He kind of brought it on himself.”

Shortly after the fight ended, Mayweather’s uncle and trainer, Roger, praised his nephew, saying that he stuck with the game plan to walk right through Ortiz. He said Mayweather would knock Pacquiao out even sooner than the fourth round. As for the heckling, he shrugged.

“That’s how boxing go,” Roger Mayweather said. “People hate you for different reasons. But as long as you close the show out, that’s what people came to see.”

His nephew shared that sentiment, even if he appears stung deep down by all the criticism, criticism he repeats when he goes on and on and on about the disrespect shown him.

An hour into the news conference, Mayweather was still talking, training his machine-gun mouth on those he considers his enemies.

“I’ll just say, what goes around comes around,” he said.

Perhaps one day, he’ll recognize there’s one person to blame more than any other. He could’ve been Pretty Boy Floyd, the best boxer in the world.

He chose to be Money Mayweather, the most loathsome and most loathed.