



## **MIKE TYSON: RAGS TO RICHES, GREATNESS TO SADNESS TO HAPPINESS.**

By Kerry Schmidt 07-03-2005

New York City, June 30, 1966: An 8 ½ pound boy was born to an unwed couple, with the father abandoning Michael Gerard Tyson when he was two.

His mother did her best, but, in a poverty and crime infested neighborhood, the anger and survival instincts of Tyson were born.

His story has been well chronicled, and his life – from good to bad to ugly, and all else in between – has woven a tale of extremely complicated proportions.

At the age of eight, Tyson somehow found an intense interest in pigeons. Even today, he has over 2000 of them. He calls them “the middle of my universe.”

When he was 11 ½ years old, a much larger, 16-year old neighborhood bully/gang banger grabbed one of his pigeons and pulled the head off. Although Tyson already had a couple of run-ins with the police, they were non-violent. But at the sight of his beloved dead pigeon, a volcano of rage erupted in Mike and he beat the much bigger kid so severely that he was hospitalized for weeks.

That rage became a driving force in his life, serving him well in boxing, but, often uncontrolled, it also led to his downfall.

At 13, he wound up in a youth correctional unit, where a school’s sports coach, and ex boxer named Bobby Stewart, offered to teach Tyson the art of boxing if he agreed to obey the rules of his correctional unit.

“Iron Mike” was born.

Stewart immediately saw vast potential in Tyson and had renowned Cus d’ Amato, trainer of two heavyweight champions, come see him. Cus immediately said “this is the future heavyweight champion of the world.”

Under Amato’s tutelage, Iron Mike progressed rapidly. His first pro fight was a KO of Hector Mercedes in 105 seconds on March 6, 1985. Mercedes was out cold for nearly 10 minutes, and the legend was born.

Mike fought 28 times – all victories - in ’85-86, with 16 of them KO’s in the first round, and only five of the 28 went past the 5<sup>th</sup> round.

So devastating a puncher was Mike that he generated genuine fear in his opponents.

I was in Las Vegas on September 6, 1986, for the Larry Holmes championship fight.

Tyson was on the under card, and I went to his training area one morning and met him.

He looked like a bull with a human head. But he was nice, charming and generous with his time. I had my picture taken with him and he autographed it.

He KO’d Alonzo Ratliff in round two.

About this time, his beloved d’ Amato passed away, and the blood sucking vultures like Don King and others began to circle.

On November 22, 1986, six weeks after I met him, He destroyed WBO heavyweight champ Trever Berbick in two rounds, becoming, at 20, the youngest champion ever.

Four months later, Iron Mike took the WBA title from Boncrusher Smith, who admitted later that he “fought only to survive, not win. His power was so unbelievable, I was afraid to get near him.”



## OFF THE WALL SPORTS

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By 1988, he had unified the titles, but after one half of his management team, Jim Jacobs, died, King began to tighten his grip on Tyson, and the downfall was soon to begin. But the fight I will never forget was September 27, 1988 in Atlantic City. I was there to watch Tyson take on undefeated Michael Spinks. When Spinks entered the ring, I was shocked to see the look of utter fear etched in his face.

Rightfully so. Tyson floored Spinks 12 seconds into the first round with a right that lifted Spinks off his feet. He staggered up, attempted to stay away, but a crushing uppercut again set him on his backside and he stayed down for the count at just 91 seconds. It was truly an amazing display of raw power and rage.

As the 80's turned into the 90's, King's control of Tyson grew, and it brought broken marriages, his first loss and a rape conviction that imprisoned him for three years.

When he got out of prison in 1995, there was King to immediately milk more from the uneducated, but still high profile fighter.

Despite having earned over \$200 million, Tyson began to have financial problem, thanks to King.

The decline accelerated, and the second of the two Evander Holyfield fights in '97 was the infamous ear-biting incident.

In '98, he served nine months of an assault charge and in 2002, he was denied a Nevada boxing license due to a sexual assault charge.

He fought Lennox Lewis in Memphis in 2002, with the main story being the vicious quote to Lewis, "I want to eat your heart out and then eat your children." Tyson lost.

In 2003, he filed for bankruptcy.

Facial tattoos, more bad publicity, and forward to June 11, 2005 when he did not answer the bell after round seven to "tomato can" Kevin McBride.

Afterwards, a subdued Tyson said, "My whole life has been a waste – I've been a failure. I'm through fighting."

He went on to state how embarrassed he was with himself and his life. "I just want to get away from everyone," and added he wanted to be alone, away from the spotlight.

We all know of the "crazed" Tyson behavior. What few have heard about are the millions of dollars he has donated to children's charities and the numerous appearances of behalf of same.

As sad as this story sounds, Tyson is happier now than ever. He tells of how many of his childhood friends are dead or in prison.

The uncontrolled rage that spread total fear in opponents is tamed. He says he no longer needs or desires the attention or adulation. "I don't like the people in the fight game," he said quietly. "I don't like the fans anymore. They look at me as if I have something I no longer possess. I am not that person anymore."

Iron Mike is finally at peace. The volcano is inactive, and he still has his beloved pigeons. It's as if the 39 year old former "monster" has regressed to the 11-year old boy. And he is glad to be there.

I thank him for the incredible moments of violence that made him the most feared fighter ever, and I now wish him the best. He is, at heart, truly a good man.