Holyfield, Evander (1962-) Encyclopedia Article

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Holyfield, Evander (1962—)

The only fighter besides Muhammad Ali to become a three-time heavyweight boxing champion, Evander Holyfield might unfortunately be remembered not for his achievements, but as the boxer whose ear Mike Tyson bit off in June 1997. In the 1990s, Holyfield and Tyson portrayed the diametrically opposing images of professional boxers. Holyfield rejected the snarling pitbull image projected by Tyson and so many boxers and instead presented the calm, reasoned demeanor of a serious professional.

Holyfield, raised in Atlanta, Georgia was the youngest of eight children. A scrawny child who sat on the bench during most of his sophomore football season because he was so small (five feet four inches tall, 115 pounds), Holyfield grew to 6 feet 2 inches and trained hard to reach about 212 pounds. Nevertheless, Holyfield was still considered little in the world of heavyweight boxing, where opponents weighing 230 pounds regularly entered the ring. Undaunted by his many doubters, who thought his lighter weight meant he wasn't as powerful as his opponents, Holyfield steadily rose through the heavyweight ranks to become the undisputed heavyweight champion in 1990. Losing his title in 1992, he reclaimed it from Riddick Bowe in 1993. Having lost his title a second time in 1994 to Michael Moorer, Holyfield discovered that he had a heart problem and was forced to retire.

A devout Christian, Holyfield had always given much of the credit for his success in the ring to God and to his spiritual upbringing. Relying on his faith and continuing his rigorous training schedule, he made it back to the ring. Holyfield was poised to win the heavyweight title in 1997 from Mike Tyson, who had recently reentered the ring after his stint in prison for a rape conviction. When Tyson bit off a portion of Holyfield's ear, the fight was stopped. Holyfield won a rematch later that year and remained a top contender in the heavyweight ranks at the turn of the century.

Further Reading:

"Evander Holyfield Credits God, Wife, and Family for Championship." *Jet.* December 9, 1996, 46-51.

Holyfield, Evander and Bernard Holyfield. *Holyfield: The Humble Warrior.* Nashville, Tennessee. T. Nelson Publishers, 1996.

Ryan, Jeff. "Holy Revival." *Sport.* December 1997, 34-39.