

Just another boxer

By John Hanrick

Thump! The hard clatter of skin and bone smashes off the floor of the boxing ring yet again. In recent times this seemed to be the usual habitat of this particular boxer. Dazzled and shook he lay on the floor oblivious to his surroundings, like he had just awoken from a deep slumber. His face which was almost unrecognisable to even his closest loved ones, had been dented and reshaped as a result of rounds of raw brutality from his on form opponent.

Pain starts to set in all over his body. The agony seems to focus below his eye sockets accompanied with the discomfort of his rushed breathing due to his battered rib cage. He attempts one deep breath but is severely punished for his optimism with a sharp pain in his chest.

As he continues to regain his whereabouts his senses return to him one by one. The loud drown from the crowd becomes clearer. He can hear a mixture of celebratory cheering and a mocking laughter. His opponent was beginning to show boat. The ultimate public humiliation.1. The referee began to count.

His eyes, which almost seemed to have disappeared due to the balloon like swellings around them, begin to open. A bright searing light emerges from the darkness. Blurry visions develop into blobs of colour, then into particular shapes until the majority of his sight returns. A trickle of blood originating from his left temple meanders its way down his forehead and over his nostrils. The stench of blood and sweat overwhelms him as he gets a strong urge to gag.

His opponent who continued to play the crowd directs his attention now to his victim, similar to a vulture about to swoop down on his prey. An assault of verbal abuse comes crashing down at the boxer, with no insult too vile, no name too offensive, no boundary too far. The fight is as good as over, time to put on a show! He is at victory's doorstep, or so he thinks.2. The clock counts down.

The boxer has fully regained consciousness now but half of him wishes he would still be knocked out clod on the floor, at least then the pain might go away. The countless blows his body his body had taken were beginning to take toll. His body aches with broken bones, smashed ribs and bruises as purple as beetroot covering his torso. The pain is his only focus, his main priority. He seems doomed for failure.3. The clock ticks on.

Memories come flooding back to him. The theme of failure seems to keep popping up throughout his life. From an early age all he can remember were times of disappointment for himself and those closest to him.

At this moment the harsh realization hit him like one of his opponents right hooks. In life for as far back as he could recall he had been put up to the test in his work, relationships and presently in his passion of boxing. Each and every one of these times he had failed to step up to the mark, to deliver on his talents or his promises. His will always faded and despite the best of intentions the pain barrier was never budged.

It is at this stage, all confidence has left him. He looks back upon himself, a disappointment, an embarrassment but ultimately a loser.4. Time is running away.

He reflects on his routine before the fight. He begins to analyse every small detail from his breakfast to sleeping patterns to what type of socks he wears. The hours of pure pain endured in the gym, the strict eating habits and the strain all of this places on his family's life. How this same family had taken countless sacrifices to support him. How his wife stayed at home minding this child while he was out there chasing his dream risking everything, putting in

triple shifts for him while he himself quits his own job to put boxing as the priority. Letting these people down cripples him much worse than his broken ribs. He is close to tears at this stage. A pitiful sight to say the least. 5. Why bother counting anymore.

He cautiously attempts another deep breath again met with a sharp pain. All his failures had one thing in common from the start. When he was younger his dad always pushed him in sport. Started off in soccer, then running and onto rugby, each worse than the last. He had learned an important lesson from these experiences, that unless you want something, really hunger for it there is all but no chance of success. In all of his failures he had never been too bothered.6. His supporters start to get anxious.

The obvious question then follows. Is boxing different to the others? He always had a different connection with the sport. It was a highlight of his day to skip in between the ropes strap on the gloves. It's where he was in his element. Since he had started in a young age, he had dreamed about the glory of winning, become a champion! He now understands the pain and suffering is what separates the people who want it and who think who do. He now realises those who have done it have come out better on the other side. He contemplates if he is willing to do so. 7. Hope begins to sprout.

He assesses his body's overall shape. The aches and pains seem to shrink in significance now. He is focused only one thing and that's the shining belt in his opponent's possession. It's here, right now on the floor of the ring where success is made. His mind is made up. He is giving in one big last effort. He is throwing himself back into the fray for one last chance at glory.8. The opponents smirk fades as the boxer begins to rise.

His knees feel like jelly. His body shakes like a house without foundations. He clings onto the ropes for dear life and summons all his upper body strength to haul himself upright. He bobbles around looking for his balance reminiscent of a young toddler. The crowd roars support giving him a new lease of life. The cameras are flashing, the world is watching. 9. The count is over. He raises his two fists and steps forward.