

Boxing: 'They ducked the testing issue'

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we refused to accept it," recalled Marc Ratner, director of the Nevada Athletic Commission. "He pulled out of the fight knowing we were going to test him if he came here."

Parks' former fiancé died a few months later of AIDS-related complications, but not before telling a newspaper that Parks had given her the virus. Samantha Clark said Parks told her he had tested positive for the AIDS virus while in Florida training for the McClellan fight.

Had the fight been scheduled almost anywhere else in the country, Parks could have still fought. Nevada is one of only a few states that require boxers be tested for the AIDS virus, despite the violent nature of a sport in which blood is almost always spilled.

Ratner said Arizona, Washington and Oregon also test fighters.

"It's a very sorry situation," promoter Bob Arum said Monday. "It's preposterous that in a sport like boxing that testing isn't mandatory. You should think of the other fighter first."

Although Tommy Morrison became only the second boxer to test positive for the AIDS virus since Nevada first began testing fighters in 1988, boxing officials believe other fighters who are HIV positive may simply choose to fight in states that don't require testing.

That includes most of the states that actively hold major fights, including New Jersey, New York, Florida, Texas and California.

The first boxer to test positive for HIV under Nevada's regulations went to California after his 1991 test. The boxer, a preliminary fighter with an 0-7 record, fought twice in California under an assumed name after failing the Nevada test.

"They've ducked the issue even when it has specifically been raised," Arum said. "These states have political problems, mostly from these so-called AIDS activist groups that lobby anyone in their belief that no one should ever be forced to take an AIDS test."

More than 2,100 boxers have been tested in Nevada since the state first instituted its policy in 1988. All fighters, from four-round undercard boxers to champions like Mike Tyson, must submit to annual tests.

In Morrison's case, he hadn't been tested since 1993 in Nevada, the last time he fought in the state. He had been scheduled to fight in Phoenix a few weeks earlier, where testing is required, but pulled out of the bout.

"The fighters have a better frame of mind going in there knowing their opponent is clean," said John Montano, executive director of the Arizona Boxing Commission.

In New Jersey, the referee and cornermen are required to wear plastic gloves but boxers are not tested for the AIDS virus. Nevada officials say privately that the gloves are mainly for show and are of little benefit.

"They now say the gloves have nothing to do with AIDS prevention," said Dr. Flip Homansky, the chief medical officer for the Nevada Athletic Commission. "Some guys use them over and over again which is worse for transmission chances."

It was in New Jersey where Morrison last fought, taking on former WBC champion Lennox Lewis in an Oct. 7 fight that ended with a bloodied Morrison being stopped in the seventh round.

Medical experts say the HIV virus is easily transmitted through blood, though it is not known if Morrison was HIV positive at the time.

"The guy I'm really worried about now is Lennox Lewis," Arum said. "That was a bloody fight."

Homansky said Nevada has taken the lead in testing for HIV in boxing and suggested other sports should also police their athletes.

"I think the political ramifications of testing have at times outweighed the medical ramifications in other sports," he said. "There's blood involved in a lot of sports, but the visual aspect of boxing is what people notice."

Fighter: Morrison also has acted in film and television

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a 12-round unanimous decision over George Foreman.

But that victory celebration was short-lived.

Four months after the Foreman fight, with an \$8 million payday against Lennox Lewis awaiting him, Morrison opted for a tune-up against relative unknown Michael Bentt. Bentt knocked him out in the first round.

In an interview before a June 1995 bout against Razor Ruddock, Morrison insisted his days of women chasing and finding trouble were behind him.

"There was a time where I went through a little bit of a metamorphosis, where I wasn't the most dedicated athlete in the world," he said.

"I've had my ups and downs, and I certainly like it better at the top. But I don't feel like I've accomplished what I've set out to do."

Morrison flattened Ruddock with a perfect left hook in the sixth round of their fight.

Despite a bloody loss to former WBC champion Lewis in October, Morrison appeared to be making another comeback, recently signing with King for a package of fights that was to have led to the possible shot

at Tyson.

The blond boxer's occasional acting career also had received a recent boost. Morrison, who played a leading role as the character Tommy Gunn in the movie *Rocky V*, appeared as Leo, the boxer, in January on the television comedy *Cybill*.

"This truly tragic situation brings to light that no one, including some of the strongest men in the world, are immune from this insidious disease," Sylvester Stallone, who portrayed "Rocky," said in a statement Monday. "Meeting and working with Tommy Morrison was one of my fondest memories and nothing will ever change that."

Morrison learned to punch by beating the sawdust and stuffing out of a duffel bag on the front porch of his home in Jay. He used altered birth certificates to fight in Toughman contests at age 13, flattening men twice his age. He had a reputation for barroom brawls.

He faces misdemeanor assault charges in Oklahoma for allegedly hitting the mother of his 5-year-old son and biting the finger of another woman. Morrison has denied the allegations and requested a jury trial to settle the matter.

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Horoscope by Frances Drake

For Tuesday, Feb. 13, 1996

ARIES (March 21 to April 19)

Some you deal with procrastinate. Still, it's a good time for you to go after what you want. Make a point of following through on commitments.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20)

Get-togethers with friends are highlighted. A relative could be a bit temperamental. Physical work is favored over abstract thinking, and it's a great day for getting things accomplished at home.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20)

You could have mixed feelings about a social engagement. However, if you save part of the afternoon for some extra rest, your mood will change in time for entertaining at night. Once there, you shine on the social scene.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22)

Work interests could compete with social plans on this day. Do what you must do and then take time for relaxing pursuits. Evening hours are your best time for fun.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22)

Talks about money should be kept confidential. Mental and research projects are favored. Undercurrents could affect a relationship with a close relative.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22)

You're ready to move forward with that new idea of yours. Talks with higher-ups are favored. An intimate question could concern you and your loved one in the evening.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22)

You'll be getting in touch with friends who live at a distance. Meetings with agents and advisers are favored. Tonight accents social life, but be careful not to overdo it.

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SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21)

A social connection proves helpful in business. Singles could meet with romance through the job. Partnership interests are highlighted and in the coming days.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21)

Laziness could be a problem. However, try not to get behind on your social and professional obligations. Although your career-related ideas are excellent, don't present them to bigwigs yet.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19)

Travel and educational matters are highlighted in the next few weeks. A social connection encountered will prove very beneficial to you in business in the near future. Use the evening for rest and relaxation.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18)

You're entering a period favorable for romance and partnership interests. Concentration is necessary to handle tasks at hand. A mental achievement is at its best in the evening.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20)

You'll be adding something beautiful to your home in the next few days. You could feel someone is meddling in your affairs. A responsibility at home needs handling.

YOU BORN TODAY are ambitious and are usually a good money-maker. You can succeed in business but also humanitarian pursuits. Banking and business allied to the arts often appeal to you. Both intellectual and practical, you usually find constructive outlets for your energies. Be careful that you don't place too much emphasis, though, on material success.

Birthdate of: Stockard Channing, actress; Eileen Farrell, singer; Kim Novak, actress.

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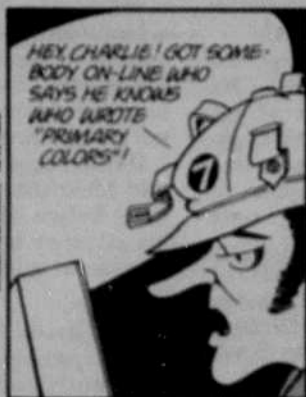
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