

The Neutral Corner

Gerry Cooney, Larry Holmes help the fight against cancer

Tuesday July 24, 2012 5:50 PM By Marcus Henry



Three decades after stepping into the ring for one of boxing's most famous fights, Larry Holmes and Gerry Cooney were back together again Tuesday.

But it was a different fight as the two heavyweights teamed up with the Pat Cairo Foundation Golf Classic at Lido Beach Golf Course to raise money for cancer research.

"Cancer affects everybody. No one wants to have it," said Holmes, who scored a 13th-round TKO over Cooney on June 11, 1982. "This is a very good cause to fight for."

Holmes and Cooney took part in a putting contest, posed for dozens of photos and signed autographs.

"They're raising money so scientists can find a way to get a cure," said Cooney, who is from Huntington. "It's happening, but we just have to dig in deep."

Joe Cairo, who established the foundation following the death of his wife Pat, was excited to see two of the fight game's most famous boxers together.

"After my wife passed away from gynecological cancer in 1995, we wanted to do something to help cancer victims," said Cairo. "We started the foundation, and since 1995 we've raised and given away \$3 million."

Money raised from the event goes to Calvary Hospital in the Bronx, which provides care for cancer patients and Dr. Carolyn Runowicz, a cancer research specialist who treated Cairo's wife.

Holmes and Cooney, who each earned \$10 million for their mega bout, gave their thoughts on the heavyweight division today.

"American fighters need to be more dedicated," said Holmes. "I have a grandson who's fighting his first fight at the end of the month. I tell him all the time you have to be dedicated and discipline yourself."

Cooney is convinced the division will eventually rise back to the top.

“The Klitschko boys, they’re great fighters, but they’re just boring here in America. One’s is 36 and one’s 40,” said Cooney. “They’re going to be turning the page and there’s a great crop of guys coming up that are going to make the heavyweight division exciting again.”

As for their epic bout, both fighters still remember the day.

“The biggest thing that happened to me was when we were in the center of the ring when Mills Lane was giving us instructions and he looked at me and said let’s have a good fight,” said Cooney. “Nothing else ever mattered to me after that except the fight.”

Holmes, who had several notable performances, including wins over Muhammad Ali, Earnie Shavers (twice), holds his win over Cooney in high regard.

“That was the highlight of my career,” said Holmes. “Even though I beat Kenny Norton for the championship, Gerry brought more of a spotlight on the fight.”

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