

## **HOLMES SWEET HOLMES? WELL, NOT REALLY; HIS OUTBURSTS HAVE CREATED PROBLEMS FOR HIS CAMP;; BUT THEY COULD HELP HIM IN THE RING AGAINST COONEY**

[FIRST Edition]

Boston Globe (pre-1997 Fulltext) - Boston, Mass.

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Date: May 30, 1982

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Section: SPORTS

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### **Document Text**

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Larry Holmes will enter the ring June 11 against Gerry Cooney a bitter man. Whatever the source of Holmes' bitterness, it has become increasingly problematic to those around him. It may ultimately prove to be problematic for Cooney.

Holmes' bitterness surfaced on Monday when he was called before Caesars Palace chairman Clifford Perlman and president Harry Wall. The Caesars brass, which paid \$5 million for the live site rights to the bout, was concerned about an altercation that took place between the Holmes and Cooney camps on May 21.

The altercation occurred when Jody Ballard, a Holmes sparring partner, had entered Cooney's workout and was asked to leave. Ballard protested, and a shouting match ensued with Walter Santemore, a Cooney sparring partner. Later, as the Cooney group left the workout area, it was confronted by four of Holmes' sparring partners at the swimming pool. Hotel guests got out of the way as the Holmes fighters repeatedly tried to provoke a fight.

Caesars became concerned when one of Cooney's bodyguards reported that a Holmes fighter was carrying a gun. Jay Edson, a Caesars fight coordinator and former referee, went to Holmes the next day.

"I asked him to control his fighters," said Edson. "He said he wouldn't cause any trouble himself, but there was nothing he could do about the others."

So Pearlman decided to talk to Holmes. Holmes was accompanied by promoter Don King, according to a source in the Holmes camp.

"Larry, we don't want to have any more problems with your camp," said Perlman. "You leave here after June 11, but we've got to stay and operate a hotel. Tell your people to stay out of the Cooney workouts."

"You're not letting my people in because they're black," Holmes replied. "I have to feel that all blacks have to stay out."

"Larry, you've always been treated well by Caesars," said Perlman. "There's no reason to say something like that."

Holmes was about to reply when King put a hand on his shoulder.

"We're going to cooperate," said King.

Caesars, which has been host to eight of Holmes' title fights, was already upset by a recent Holmes interview on PBS in which he called the hotel/casino "cheap."

"Do you know how much money Holmes has taken out of Caesars?" said one hotel executive.

Holmes has apparently decided not to return the favor. He is playing the dice tables across the street at the Barbary Coast. But Caesars is not Holmes' only whipping boy. His truculence is all encompassing.

Trainers Ray Arcel, 82, and Eddie Futch, 72, were the targets the week before last. Holmes was upset after spending seven hours filming a Bob Hope special on Sunday (May 16), his usual day off. He vented his fury in his next workout and Arcel and Futch decided to rein him in.

"There was a danger he would work too hard and be overtrained," said Arcel. "I told him to ease off. He didn't like it and he said so."

After another workout, Holmes ventured onto a tennis court and began to hit tennis balls. Arcel told him to stop. "He got mad," said Arcel. "What are you gonna do?"

Members of the Holmes camp dread his frequent outbursts of temper because of his habitual profanity.

"It's not a nice thing to hear how Larry talks to Eddie Futch and Ray Arcel," said one camp regular. "They are old men and they deserve more respect. I feel sorry for them."

"What can I tell you?" said Arcel. "I don't like it either, but that's the way he is. The man is at heart a very generous and good man."

Arcel is magnanimous in his defense of Holmes because Arcel was fired by Holmes after his first bout with Earnie Shavers. Holmes has also fired Richie Giachetti, his trainer-manager from 1973 to 1981; and Freddie Brown, his cutman in both the Ken Norton and Muhammad Ali bouts. Keith Kleven, his longtime physical therapist, was almost fired a few weeks ago but talked himself back into favor. Holmes wanted to dump Kleven for Daeshik Seo, the Korean therapist from Merrimac, N.H., but finally put both on the payroll.

Brown, 73 and retired, thinks Holmes has undergone a change of attitude in the last year, or since Giachetti testified before a federal grand jury that King - Holmes' closest adviser - was paying off WBC president Jose Sulaiman. Giachetti also testified that he had tape recorded telephone conversations with Holmes.

"He used to like white people," said Brown. "I don't think he does anymore. He did because he wanted to be different from Muhammad Ali and Ali didn't like 'em. I think he listens to King, and King doesn't like whites."

But even Ali is on Holmes' spit list. Holmes was angered when Ali visited the Cooney camp and said, "Cooney is not only the white man, he is the right man." Holmes told reporters that if he had the Ali fight to do again, he would make Ali pay.

The Cooney negotiations may have inflamed Holmes' bitterness. First, Cooney was given an equal purse of \$10 million. Second, Cooney's alleged shoulder injury set the fight back to the date Cooney originally wanted. Cooney's landing the Norelco shaver commercial was the last straw because Holmes has never had a commercial. He resents Cooney's reputed charisma, just as he

resented Ali's.

"So what if 32,000 people boo Larry Holmes when he walks in (June 11) ?" Holmes said last Sunday. "Twenty-four thousand booed me against Muhammad Ali. It didn't help Ali. It won't help Loony Cooney."

Ironically, Holmes can be his own worst enemy in his quest for popularity. He recently walked out of a shooting for a Sports Illustrated cover after four minutes. An ABC crew waited for Holmes for an hour at poolside before it gave up. (Holmes did the interview later in the day.) Time photographer Neil Leifer shot a workout with a flash. Holmes didn't like the bright flash and ordered that photographers be barred from his workouts. He also ordered Murray Goodman, King's publicist, to get out of his dressing room.

"He used to beg Sports Illustrated to take his picture," said a Caesars executive. "Now he's too big."

Holmes fans will be relieved to know that Arcel attributes the champion's crankiness to a razor-sharp fighting edge.

"Remember, he's been training since January," said Arcel. "Our job now is to keep the edge. We're tapering off on our workouts."

In the ring, Holmes appeared sharp and quick. His disposition was consistent. Sparring with Ballard, Holmes allowed himself to be hit while leaning on the ropes with one hand, looking at the audience and shouting, "C'mon boy."

Ballard was asked later if he felt demeaned. "Sometimes that's Larry's intention," he said.

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