



Confessions: FLOYD MAYWEATHER

BY ERICKA BLOUNT DANOIS

The whipping sound of a jump rope falls in time to James Brown chanting, "The Payback," over the loudspeaker at Floyd Mayweather's training gym in Las Vegas a little more than a week before the big event. Mayweather is a whirlwind, entertaining the crowd with his BFF 50 Cent, punching the heavy bag, sparring for hours with his uncle Roger. With 26 knockouts, 43 wins, and \$200 million in winnings, his place in history is cemented. He has reinvigorated a sport marred by corruption. Mayweather is the man everyone loves to hate, but no one can bear to turn away from him for too long.

There he is on HBO's 24/7 eating fried chicken and onion rings. He has bags of cash divided into 10K bankrolls that he can spend on a whim, or recklessly gamble. He has a fleet of white cars in Vegas, black

ones in Miami. He's arguing with his father, not speaking to him for nearly a decade. He's copping a plea for a domestic violence charge that will land him in Clark County Detention Center in Vegas for 90 days. He's generously supporting his crew, dozens of family members, their children, paying tuition, paying medical bills. He's being sued by Manny Pacquiao for defamation of character. He dropped out of high school to support his family. He visits his mother every Sunday. His life is complicated.

Mayweather relishes in his status as an anti-hero—after all, how can you really hate someone so talented? His uncanny ability to anticipate opponents' moves, coupled with his defensive abilities have allowed his opponents to land only 16 percent

of punches thrown, the lowest in CompuBox's database. He is an enigma—except for his wrath—whether it's opponents in the ring, Larry Merchant after the fight, family members, or his staff. If there's one thing Mayweather will consistently do well, it will be to fight.

"He is the Ali of our generation," said 50 Cent, who entertains the crowd with jokes as Floyd spars with his uncle Roger. "He will leave this training camp and go and run six miles."

"I'm fighting like I still got something to prove," says Mayweather. "I want to go down as the best, and I will go down as the best."

WINNING...is important. I was born to be a winner. But I don't think winning is always getting your hand raised in the sport of boxing. It's also giving back to people who are less fortunate.

LOVE...means to the death. Loyalty.

FAMILY... is a motivational builder. Seven of us living in a one bedroom. My dad went to prison for five years. My mother struggled, we had it rough. I wanted to break the cycle and put my family in a great position, so I left school to come to Vegas and give it my all. I [then] brought my family with me to make sure they had a comfortable life.

IF EL POLLO LOCO CLOSED...I'd reopen it [laughs].

A CHAMPION...

can take a loss and bounce back.
I think a guy who loses a fight gains something from the loss.

BEFORE A FIGHT...I am talking with uncle Roger about the game plan and just relaxing, letting them rotate my ankles and getting ready for the big dance.

PARENTING IS...a great thing. I'm able to give my kids a great education that I wasn't able to get because I had to be the man of my house at a very young age.

AFTER BOXING...I have some tycoons I'm doing business with, not just in America, but all over the world. I'm focused on being the face of boxing and I want the sport to live on. The ultimate goal is to give back to boxing.

A GOOD DAY...is just waking to see another day.

BEING AT THE TOP MEANS... right now I don't want to rank myself, I would rank myself as the best because I have yet to take an L. It's not easy for a fighter to dominate for 16 years, I'm almost 20 years as a professional, still looking like I'm 21 years old, that's a blessing. Other fighters may have 10 or 12 good years, but I have yet to have a bad year.