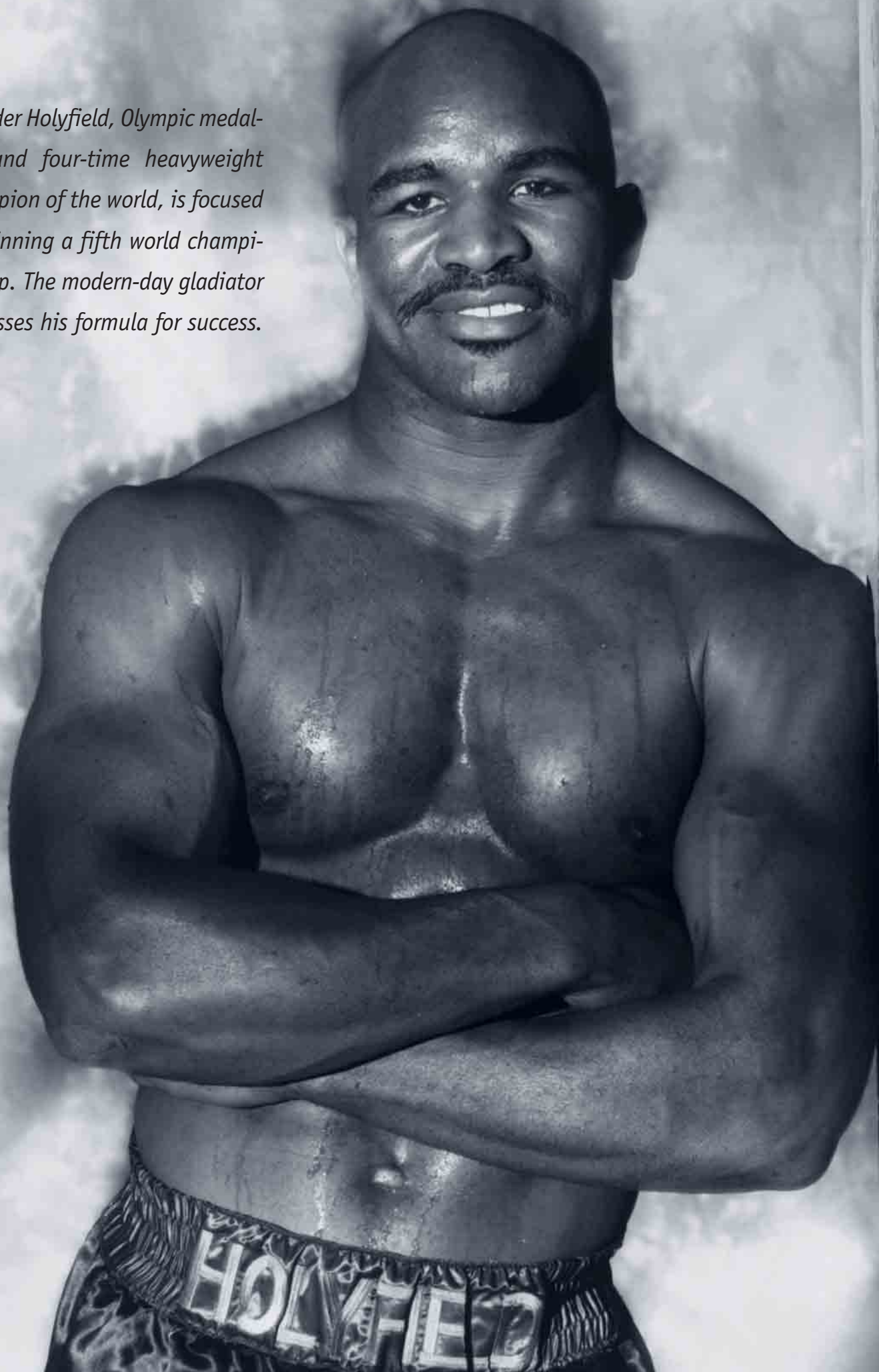


Evander Holyfield, Olympic medalist and four-time heavyweight champion of the world, is focused on winning a fifth world championship. The modern-day gladiator discusses his formula for success.





THE REAL DEAL

By Joseph A. Arangio, M.S., C.S.C.S. Photography by Jay Rusovich

He trains in a spartan boxing gym in downtown Houston. Within the concrete walls hang battered heavy bags, their worn leather skin a testament to the punishing nature of the game. At 6' 2½" and nearly 230 pounds, Evander Holyfield, or "Holy," as he is called, is an imposing figure. In a sport inundated with callous braggarts he is the consummate professional. He is ferocious within the boxing arena yet exhibits a poised disposition when he steps outside of the ring. He is at peace with himself. Evander is a skilled craftsman who uses his knowledge of the ring, strong will and stamina to wear down his opponents. We caught up with the champ recently at the Holyfield camp in Texas.

Boxing Gym, Monday 9:00 p.m.

R & B music fills the warm room. Holyfield moves gracefully as he shadow boxes an imaginary opponent. Left jab, right hook. His head tilts laterally as he slips make-believe punches. After several minutes the warrior suits up for battle. He dons protective headgear and slides his carefully wrapped hands into white leather boxing gloves like a doctor preparing for surgery.

An impressive sparring partner climbs through the ropes. He is larger than Evander. The bell sounds and the fighters move swiftly about the ring. The champ is relaxed as he jabs his opponent, calculating his next move. Holyfield unleashes a barrage of punches—backing his sparring partner against the ropes. The bell sounds again. After a few rounds the fighters touch gloves and it's on to more shadow boxing.

At the end of the workout Evander's trainer, Tim Hallmark, helps the champ stretch seemingly every muscle in his body. Hallmark is the man behind Holy's muscle, the strength and conditioning specialist. He's been on the Holyfield team since 1986. Hallmark's scientifically designed conditioning programs allow Evander to outlast his opponents. "His strength and conditioning program is in a constant state of evolution. The goal of our training is to mimic the challenging nature of a fight. When Evander recovers between rounds, we know that he is not as tired as the other guy," says Hallmark.

Evander's House, 11:30 p.m.

Holyfield relaxes after practice. A massage therapist works on his hands while the champ looks at the Lakers game on television. He talks about his childhood and the driving forces in his life. The four-time heavyweight champion of the world is on the road to a fifth championship.



MM: You have a long history of success in the ring. How did you get started?

HOLYFIELD: When I was 8 years old I saw a guy hitting the speed bag at the Warren Boys Club in Atlanta, Georgia. I wanted to learn how to hit the speed bag, too, but the man in the gym said that I needed to be on the boxing team. I persisted until he allowed me to join. One day Carter Morgan, my late boxing coach, watched me hit the heavy bag until my hands were bleeding—he realized my toughness and said that I could be the heavyweight champ of the world. I told him that I was only 8 years old—Coach said that I wouldn't always be 8. When I told him that I only weighed 65 pounds, he said that I wouldn't always be 65 pounds

either. I was taught from a young age to set my standards high. I could be like Muhammad Ali if I put my mind to it.

When I asked my mother if I could be the heavyweight champion of the world, she looked into my eyes and said I could be anything I wanted to be—if I was willing to pay the price. So I went back to the boxing gym and told my coach that my mother gave me permission to be the heavyweight champ of the world. From that moment on, I had a goal.

When I lost my first match at 11 years old, I went home and told my mother that I quit boxing. She told me that she didn't raise a quitter—I had to fight again. Although I lost for a second time, my mother told me to go back into the ring and

win. When I finally beat the kid, my mother told me that I never had to fight again because I overcame the situation. She taught me a valuable lesson: If you quit every time things don't go your way, then you'll be quitting all through your life.

Winning allowed me to leave Georgia and continue to box, to meet people. There was so much positive reinforcement associated with winning. My coaches were happy, and I was proud to bring my awards home to my family. Every day I was one step closer to the heavyweight championship. I took a lot of little steps to get where I am today.

MM: How do you mentally prepare for the physical demands of boxing?

HOLYFIELD: I always felt at peace with myself because I knew that God would take care of me. That didn't mean I was always the winner—but when it counted, I was successful. Idle people will eventually come to poverty. I knew that it was important for me to work hard. My mother instilled the values of hard work and perseverance. My father was well known for his work ethic. He was a proud man who talked about how he would never let another man outwork him. He would work harder than three men. The combination of this strong work ethic and my belief in God gives me confidence to succeed.

MM: How does your training prepare you for the rigors of boxing?

HOLYFIELD: People who fear pain will have a tough time being successful in life. Whether physical or mental, pain is part of our existence. Successful people do not let physical or emotional pain get in the way of their goals. I understand that boxing is a contact sport and I am going to get hit. Whether painful or not, I need to do what is necessary to win. Every time I make a mistake in boxing, I pay for it immediately. You can get cracked in the

mouth or knocked down. The successful person has the heart to learn from his mistakes and persevere. In life you have to be accountable for your actions.

MM: How did you create the lean, muscular physique necessary for success, as well as injury prevention?

HOLYFIELD: It's not about how strong the body is. Instead, it's a combination of my knowledge of the ring *and* training that helps me make it. Remember, the body will only do what the mind tells it to do. The body will only take what the mind tells it to take. Many boxers have great physiques, yet they don't have the knowledge and inner strength. And if you can't apply the knowledge and science of box-

ing in the ring, the body will break down.

MM: How does your training help you deal with the pressures of everyday life?

HOLYFIELD: I have used my success in boxing as a guidebook for my endeavors outside of the ring. I listen to my coaches because I want to be the best. All of the abdominal training, weight lifting, roadwork, heavy bag work and rounds of sparring is evidence that I want to be the best. I do all of this to pass the test. Everything you do is in vain if you can't handle the pressure and pass the test. A stone deep within the earth, that can handle the intense pressure, will become a diamond one day. Every man can handle a certain amount of stress until he breaks. To sur-

vive, I must withstand more pressure than the average man.

MM: How often do you train with free weights?

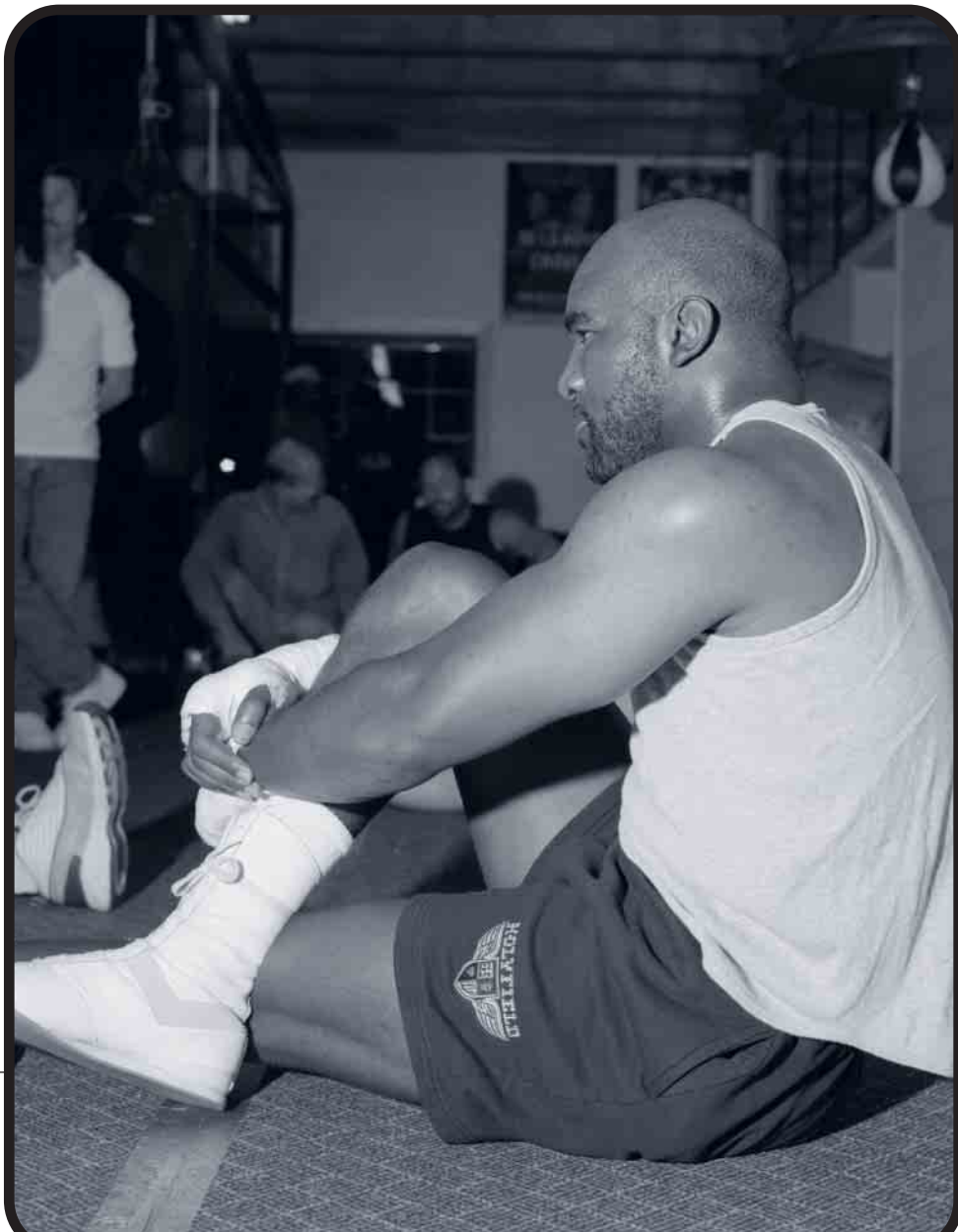
HOLYFIELD: When I'm preparing for a fight I lift weights three times each week. In the off-season I perform five weight workouts each week. In the 50s and 60s no boxers lifted weights. At that time coaches thought that weight training would restrict you, make you slow. But in 1986 I began working with an innovative trainer, Tim Hallmark, who specialized in strength and conditioning. He sold me on the fact that the weights would make me better. When people saw me they said, "He's built like a bodybuilder—he's not going to be able to box." But resistance training revolutionized the sport of boxing. Now everyone who wants to be successful in the ring has a properly designed weight-lifting program.

MM: What do you do to maintain your cardiovascular prowess?

HOLYFIELD: I run, swim, ride a stationary cycle, jump rope and hit the speed bag. There is a lot of excellent equipment out there to keep you interested. If the goal is to train my heart and lungs, there are alternatives to pounding the heavy bag—like the bike. When I'm working on boxing-specific skills, I hit the heavy bag and the target mitts. Running is no longer the only method to train the heart and lungs. Back in the day, coaches thought that the only way to succeed was to do the things that the other boxers were doing—which turned out to be the wrong advice.

MM: Describe a typical session in the gym.

HOLYFIELD: I train with weights at 11 a.m. In the weight room I have a carefully planned strength-training workout—based on the specific training phase that I am going through. Roadwork consists of running. I mix it up by running backward and



laterally to improve my footwork skills. This also trains my muscles at angles that they're not used to. I also like swimming—it's easy on the joints and tough on the cardiovascular system.

We perform the boxing-specific workout in the evening. In the boxing gym we start off with a prayer—this gives me strength to focus on the task ahead. Next we do a five-minute warm-up, stretch, do plyometrics—box jumps and medicine ball work—shadow box, hit the target mitts, hit the heavy bag, hit the speed bag, shadow box and finish up with more stretching.

MM: Tell us about your training secrets.

HOLYFIELD: There are no secrets. Everything is ordinary in the game of boxing. To rise above the masses, you need to stay focused and believe in yourself.

MM: Describe your nutrition strategies.

HOLYFIELD: Nutrition is very important. Food is like gasoline. You have to figure out what kind of engine you have. Certain cars have certain engines. If you have a jet engine, you need jet fuel. The top physiques are like jet engines—you cannot put low-grade fuel into a jet engine and expect it to perform at a high level. My body has a very fast metabolism. I eat around six small meals each day and drink plenty of water. If I wait too long in between meals, I don't perform well. This method works for me.

For example, at breakfast I have a ground beef patty, two eggs over easy, oatmeal and water with my vitamins. The next meal is a turkey sandwich with grapes and carrots. Two hours later I'll have a protein shake. Another meal is rice, beans and cornbread. After an evening training session I have a protein drink. My dinner consists of greens, some kind of meat, rice and cornbread with my vitamins.

MM: How do you reward yourself for sticking to a portion-controlled nutrition schedule?



HOLYFIELD: Sometimes I have pizza for lunch or for another meal. I'm not into sweets, but I have ice cream every now and then. What people don't realize is that when you work as hard as I do in the gym and in the ring, it would take a lot more than ice cream or apple pie to mess you up. That is the beauty of hard training; one bad meal will not hurt you. If you spend 20 years of your life on the sofa, then one piece of cake may cause trouble.

MM: How do you recover after a long day in the ring or a tough workout?

HOLYFIELD: You can hit the heavy bag and run and lift weights, but it's also important to rest. When you train hard the body breaks down and it won't get any stronger unless you allow it to recover. We record all of my

training sessions, and I relax while I review the tapes to see how I can improve. Every day I ask myself: What can I do better? When I can no longer observe an improvement in my performance, it will be time for me to leave the sport of boxing.

MM: How does regular training affect your confidence levels?

HOLYFIELD: When you train at a high level, your confidence is high, you feel good about yourself and your self-esteem is great. If I make the mental commitment to accomplish a goal, I know that it is physically possible. That's why it's important to build a strong body. Because regardless of the knowledge that you have, a weak body will not allow you to perform when it counts.

It is also important to make an agreement with yourself or someone who cares about you. That way you have to be accountable to yourself and others. In life everything is risk-reward. If you start a company, you take a risk, and if the company is successful, you will reap the benefits. On the other hand some people prefer a lifestyle with minimal responsibilities. Everyone has to choose the path that is best suited for him or her.

MM: What makes you happy?

HOLYFIELD: I experience joy knowing that if I have the right game plan and work hard, I can achieve anything.

MM: Where do you see yourself in five years?

HOLYFIELD: I will have grown in my respective endeavors outside of the ring: I have

a television network, a music company, a clothing company and a charitable foundation. I will continue to share my experiences with others—how I came from the projects to become four-time heavyweight champion of the world, successful business owner. My experiences may act as a bridge to help others make a better life for themselves.

MM: Think of someone you admire—explain why?

HOLYFIELD: I admire a few people. First and foremost, the Lord Jesus Christ. Martin Luther King is another person who I admire. He helped make all people equal—he talked about how skin color is not as important as character and integrity. The next person is my mother. She raised nine children—I was the youngest. She taught me to persevere when times were tough. She also taught me to have faith in God.

MM: How does regular training help you manage the responsibilities of fatherhood?

HOLYFIELD: My life is filled with valuable learning experiences. I made mistakes and I have a great remembrance of those mistakes. This knowledge helps me steer my kids in the proper direction. I am confident that my children will be successful in whatever they choose. I teach my kids to be respectful and avoid the pitfalls that I have encountered in my life.

MM: What are the three most important things that you've learned in your life?

HOLYFIELD: A strong family is an important part of life because success starts at home. Second, we are all one as human beings and the color of your skin makes no difference. Finally, love rules. Surround yourself with people you love and who love and care about you, too.



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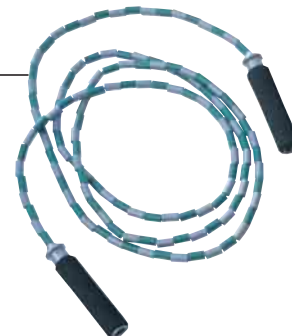
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