

Former world champion boxer sacrifices career for his children (Written for Yahoo.com)

Not long ago, Don Juan Futrell was crowned the WBC USNBC light welterweight champion of the world. Spectators noted his impressive hand speed and south-paw stance as key factors in the unanimous victory over Hector Alatorre. With a record of 22-4-2 and 10 KO's, Futrell was, as they say, the "real deal."

Now, at age 39 and more than two years removed from his last fight, the St. Louis native has had his title stripped due to inactivity. As far as the World Boxing Council is concerned, he is a champion no longer-- which is fine, because outside of the ring he has evolved into someone far greater.

Futrell is a single father to five boys: Carvon Futrell (17), Don Juan Futrell (16), Daivon Futrell (15), Tavon Futrell (13) and Desmond Futrell (12). It goes without saying that such a task has kept him adequately occupied.

"Not hard, I wouldn't use that word "hard"," says Futrell when responding to whether or not parenting the boys on his own has been difficult. "I'll say challenging, dealing with five different personalities. Challenging in the sense where one might want tacos for dinner, one might want pizza and one might want hamburgers. (Laughs)"

Futrell is quick to point out that he very much enjoys being a father but also acknowledges that he does not believe anyone would necessarily want to be a *single* father. "To me it wasn't a choice," he states. "If the mother wasn't willing to step up, I was." He also admits awareness that his children probably miss out on certain things because he is raising them alone.

A self-proclaimed disciplinarian who is not very emotional or affectionate, Futrell feels that he can sometimes be too hard on his boys and if there were a mother figure around, she could help balance things out. Having been raised by both of his parents, Futrell says he had "the best of both worlds" and sometimes feels a bit disappointed that his children do not.

He does take some solace in the old adage, "you can't miss what you never had." According to Futrell, the boys have never had a mother figure in their lives consistently. He can speculate on the reasons why sustainable efforts have not been made. Perhaps it is due to having been young, self-involvement, or simple disinterest.

For whatever reason, although the boys may miss the *idea* of having a woman around the house every day, all that they really know is life as it is currently. The boxer says his sons probably don't notice the void nearly as much as he does.

"It's things that a woman or a mother could give them that I couldn't possibly give them," he says. "But, I try my best."

Understanding that there are things that he simply cannot offer his children, Futrell is determined to provide all that he absolutely can. It is this mindset which likely persuaded him to become involved when the boys actually did present a challenge more daunting than diverse dinner selections.

On Thanksgiving 2010, the guys watched "The Temptations" on television. After the movie concluded, Futrell says his sons went upstairs into the game room and he heard them singing. When asked what they were doing, the boys bluntly told their father, "We're a singing group now."

Initially, Futrell did not take them seriously and continued preparing for his next fight. But Don Juan Jr. and his brothers continued practicing every single day. Once Futrell saw how hard they were working, he decided to put them in a show. "I called a few of my buddies up and told them that my kids were a singing group," he says with a chuckle.

One of those buddies informed him of an upcoming showcase in Beverly Hills, CA, for the Michael Jackson Foundation. Here is where the newly formed quintet, which now goes merely by "Futrell," made its debut performance. Although they were received well, the boys' father still viewed the idea as fleeting. He thought they would perform and that would be the end of it-- that the boys would return home to Las Vegas, NV, and move on to playing football, or even boxing.

"I was so mad when none of them wanted to box," Futrell says. "I know boxing, I don't know singing and dancing!" Lucky for him, his kids are very good at what they do and do not need much assistance in that department.

Led by its youngest member, Desmond, the talent of the group is undeniable and apparent within seconds of observing a performance. Futrell describes the boys' sound as being slightly different, not trendy, and a throwback to an era when music had substance. As a result, their budding careers have taken off so quickly that they must now be home schooled due to a sometimes hectic traveling schedule.

Upon witnessing that this was not a phase and the boys were truly dedicated to the craft, Futrell got on board without hesitation. "Being a father, you want to help your kids with their dreams and goals," he says. From that point on, the group became his top priority.

There was never a conscious decision to abandon his boxing career. Futrell's attention just began to shift as he became so passionately consumed with seeing that his sons, who practice 8-12 hours daily, achieve the success for which they are working so diligently.

"I miss it. I miss it every day," Futrell says in regard to boxing. "But I had my time in the sun. It's their time."

It is worth noting that Futrell still trains regularly, lives a healthy lifestyle, and has every intention of reentering the ring soon. He does not want his career to end [this way](#), with a loss to an opponent whose name he cannot even remember. Futrell would ultimately like to put

someone in place that he trusts with the boys and their careers. Then and only then will he be able to give boxing the unparalleled focus it requires.

So, for now he is very hands-on with the group while being careful to not let that responsibility interfere with the one he considers most important. "I'm daddy first," he says. "I know my role, and my role is to raise them as decent, respectable men who will contribute to society in a positive way."

To Futrell, what his sons accomplish with their music comes second in order of importance. The fact that they are by all accounts humble, giving young men who are active in the Las Vegas community serves as testament to this.

In comparison, whether or not Futrell takes another fight, and what he does or does not accomplish upon doing so matters little. He has excelled in a position for which all of the training in the world cannot prepare a man. More than a champion, more than a hero, he is a father-- and that is one title that can never be taken away.

