

British boxer Ben Whittaker REFUSES to wear his silver medal on the podium and stuffs in his pocket

By Shekhar Bhatia and Nick Fagge and Sam Blitz For Mailonline 05:00 EDT 04 Aug 2021

A British boxer stunned an Olympic audience on Wednesday night when he refused point-blank to wear his medal on the podium.

Ben Whittaker kept his head down throughout the ceremony and when his name was announced he collected his silver and stuffed it into his pocket as his fellow medallists looked on.

Whittaker, 24, of West Bromwich, looked crestfallen and barely raised his head to look at the Union Flag as it was unveiled next to the flags of the other medallists from , and the Russian Olympic Committee.



Team GB boxer Ben Whittaker (far left) took off his silver medal after losing his light-heavyweight gold-medal fight



The 24-year-old took off his medal and stuck it in his pocket as fellow medallists looked on

He produced his medal from his pocket and reluctantly held it for the photographers as the other three boxers hugged and smiled for the cameras, with medals around their necks.

Asked by MailOnline why he hadn't worn his medal, Whittaker said: 'Yeah, so, I didn't win a gold.

'I lost a gold, so to me it's a failure so I am not going to celebrate silver at the moment. I am sure over the years I will look back and see what an achievement it is.'

He added: 'You don't win silver...you lose gold. So that is why I was so emotional. Nobody trains for silver or bronze.'



© Andy Hooper Daily Mail

Whittaker was in tears after losing the final to Cuba's Arlen Lopez via a split decision

‘Everybody up here trained for the gold medal. I woke up this morning truly believing this was my time. I had the whole of the West Midlands behind me and Great Britain

‘Congratulations to Arlen. It was his time. He is a great boxer. I just have to go back to the gym, change a few things, work harder and hopefully next time it will be my turn.’

Due to Covid safety rules, medal winners no longer have their awards placed around their necks by officials and dignitaries and instead the awards are presented to them to be self-placed.

Whittaker kept his hands in his pockets throughout the medal celebration for the light heavyweight medals and had earlier left the ring after his defeat to Arien Lopez of Cuba wiping away tears.



Whittaker (left) called himself a 'failure' for picking up silver, saying 'nobody trains for silver

When he appeared with the other medallists later, he was asked to wear the medal, but took it off immediately on leaving the Ryogoku Kokugikan arena and returned it to his pocket.

Piers Morgan, who criticised the praise directed towards Simone Biles and Ben Stokes after the pair withdrew from the Olympics and England cricket duties respectively due to mental health reasons, hailed Whittaker for his statement.

The former Good Morning Britain presenter tweeted: 'Love this - finally, an athlete at these Olympics prepared to tell the truth about competing in elite sport. Good for you @Ben Whittaker.'

Another fan posted: 'I like that interview from Ben Whittaker , honest and disappointed with a silver medal because in his mind he hasn't won the silver he's lost the gold and that is the mentality he needs to move forward.'



Piers Morgan ✓
@piersmorgan



'You don't win silver, you lose gold. I'm very disappointed - I feel like a failure. You're in this game to win gold.'

Love this - finally, an athlete at these Olympics prepared to tell the truth about competing in elite sport.

Good for you [@BenGWhittaker](#).

Whittaker received the support of Piers Morgan who praised his mentality after the fight

However, Whittaker has also been criticised for 'disgraceful' behaviour by several fans and commentators.

One observer in Tokyo said: 'I have been to Olympics over the last 25 years and witnessed many, many medal ceremonies but I have never seen anything like this.'

'It wasn't fair to the other boxers and the Olympics. He needs to learn to accept this loss and come back stronger next time.'

Fans on social media also slammed Whittaker for snubbing his silver medal at the ceremony, with the 24-year-old branded 'disrespectful' and a 'really bad loser'.



Lynsey Ross
@Lynsey2901

Replying to [@TeamGB](#) and [@BenGWhittaker](#)

Disgusting behaviour at the medal ceremony. He doesn't deserve to be part of the team. Spoiled, petulant, disgraceful.



non jones
@nonjones5



Replying to @TeamGB and @BenGWhittaker

Really bad loser - getting an Olympic silver medal is something to be very proud of. Children who would be watching could emulate this bad sportsmanship.



Gareth Danter-Hill
@Gdanterhill



Replying to @TeamGB and @BenGWhittaker

Silver medal is a great achievement! Bit disappointed to him not hanging the medal around his neck. I think that's disrespectful to other athletes who would dream of achieving a Silver



Lee Burns
@Big_Burnie



Replying to @TeamGB and @BenGWhittaker

Unfortunately disgraced himself at the medal ceremony. Hang that medal around your neck and be proud like the rest of #teamgb 🇬🇧 you've done great to get silver 🥈

Fans reacted furiously to Whittaker's decision to snub his silver medal on the Tokyo podium

One fan tweeted: 'Silver medal is a great achievement! Bit disappointed to him not hanging the medal around his neck. I think that's disrespectful to other athletes who would dream of achieving a Silver.'

Another posted: 'Really bad loser - getting an Olympic silver medal is something to be very proud of. Children who would be watching could emulate this bad sportsmanship.'

Meanwhile, one fan said: 'Unfortunately disgraced himself at the medal ceremony. Hang that medal around your neck and be proud like the rest of #teamgb you've done great to get silver.'

One angry fan tweeted: 'Disgusting behaviour at the medal ceremony. He doesn't deserve to be part of the team. Spoiled, petulant, disgraceful.'

Long after the fight, Whittaker apologised to any offence he may have caused for discarding the medal.

He added: 'At the time I should have took it on the chin and put the beautiful silver medal around my neck and just smiled.'

'I wasn't trying to be disrespectful to him (Lopez the gold medalist). It's his moment and I don't want to try and take the shine away from him.'



The 24-year-old (left) claimed he 'woke up this morning truly believing this was my time'

Mayor of Wolverhampton promises ceremonial chains to Ben Whittaker

He was born in Wolverhampton and said he got into boxing through his father's love for the sport.

In an interview released by the Olympics 2020, he said: 'I was in and out of trouble at school, very hyperactive and my mother couldn't handle me.

'So my dad took me down to the gym to burn off energy and gain some discipline. I haven't looked back since.

'Boxing is my life and I thank boxing for the opportunities it has given me. School was never for me, I needed to be active. Sitting in a classroom was a big no.'



Ben Whittaker ✓
@BenGWhittaker

If your happy with a bronze or a silver medal you ain't fit for the TOP! 100

Whittaker revealed in October of last year that he would not be happy with a silver medal

He had told an interviewer in April about his ambitions which was 'to win a gold medal at the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, and to become world champion.'

In October, Whittaker posted a tweet saying: 'If your happy with a bronze or a silver medal you ain't fit for the TOP!'

Several British sports stars have been accused of 'petulance' by refusing to wear their runners-up medals in recent years, including England's Euro 2020 squad who lost the tournament final to Italy via a penalty shootout last month.



England's Euro 2020 stars, including goalscorer Luke Shaw (right), took their silver medals off after losing the final to Italy last month



© UEFA via Getty Images

Three Lions captain Harry Kane took his off straight away in the medal ceremony at Wembley



© Visionhaus/Getty Images

England manager Gareth Southgate kept his medal on in the aftermath of the ceremony

Only seven of the Three Lions' squad - Jordan Pickford, Harry Maguire, Tyrone Mings, Aaron Ramsdale, Sam Johnstone, Raheem Sterling and Jordan Henderson- chose to keep their silver medals around their neck, while England manager Gareth Southgate also did not take his off.

But most of squad appeared to remove their medals just moments after receiving them, to mixed reaction from their fans - with some slamming the 'disrespectful' and 'unsporting' behaviour while others insisted it is 'standard practice' to remove runners-up medals at sporting contests.

Actor and failed London mayoral candidate Laurence Fox slammed the England stars, calling them 'kneeling babies' and 'sore losers'.

He tweeted: 'You don't take your medal off in camera shot like it's someone else's fault that you took too many steps for your penalty. You lost. Pay your respects to those who beat you by waiting ten yards before you pull your medal off. Be gracious. Sore losers.'



Laurence Fox 🇬🇧 🇬🇧 🇬🇧
@LozzaFox

...

Kneeling babies taking off their medals.

Such enormous lack of class.

11:13 PM · Jul 11, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone



Laurence Fox 🇬🇧 🇬🇧 🇬🇧
@LozzaFox

...

You don't take your medal off in camera shot like it's someone else's fault that you took too many steps for your penalty.

You lost. Pay your respects to those who beat you by waiting ten yards before you pull your medal off.

Be gracious. Sore losers.

11:19 PM · Jul 11, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone



katy ✨

@wonderchanges



England taking off their silver medals?? Nah this is just childish #EURO2020final



From **Emma**

11:28 PM · Jul 11, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone



Ben Larkin

@benlarkin1



I personally cheered those England players removing their silver medals



George Asher

@georgeasher247



Replying to [@wonderchanges](#)

Hardly childish they wanted to win and the medal is just a reminder of their disappointment.

1:02 AM · Jul 12, 2021 · Twitter Web App

England fans on social media were split on England's players taking their silver medals off

One Twitter user posted: 'I really don't get why England players took off the medals so quickly and dismissively. Bad vibe x sport. They played well throughout the tournament. Period.'

Another viewer said: 'Taking the medals off is EXACTLY why the rest of the UK don't support England.'

But die-hard Three Lions fans defended the players, with one supporter tweeting: 'Hardly childish... it's the mentality of the the fact they still lost, why wear a medal for second place'

Another said: 'I personally cheered those England players removing their silver medals.'



© Andy Hooper/Daily Mail
England's rugby stars removed their medals after losing the World Cup final to South Africa



© ITV
Prop Kyle Sinckler took his runners-up medal off from around his neck after receiving it

In 2019, England's rugby stars also refused to wear their runners-up medals after losing the Rugby World Cup final 32-12 to South Africa.

Maro Itoje did not put his on while Kyle Sinckler quickly tore his off during the post-game ceremony and captain Owen Farrell took his off before South Africa lifted their trophy.

Fans watching the final branded England as 'sore losers' and 'unsportsmanlike' for taking their medals off so quickly.

One said at the time: 'England having a temper tantrum refusing to wear their medals. Pathetic.'



England captain Owen Farrell looked at his medal but did not put it back on after the match



Joe C
@Joe_C_London



Taking your silver medals off is very unsportsmanlike, England players. #RWCFinal 🏆

11:16 AM · Nov 2, 2019 · TweetDeck



CrimeGirl
@CrimeGirl



England having a temper tantrum refusing to wear their medals. Pathetic #RWCFinal 🏆

11:16 AM · Nov 2, 2019 · Twitter for iPhone

England's rugby players were branded as 'sore losers' for not wearing their medals

But former England rugby captain James Haskell defended Eddie Jones' side for taking off their medals as 'what matters is 1st place, the gold medal'.

He told *Sportsmail* : 'I think for obvious reasons none of England's players will be framing their runners-up medals on the wall when they get home this week. I have seen comments already criticising players for taking them off straight away after the presentation.

'Anyone who suggests this is guilty of a misunderstanding and has never played sport at the highest level. They have never worked super hard to achieve something and then fallen at the final hurdle.



James Haskell defended the likes of Maro Itoje who did not even put their silver medals on

'Nobody cares about coming second. In 2019 we make everyone feel better about themselves and say, have this medal for 10th place or it's about taking part. These are things we tell ourselves, but what matters is 1st place, the gold medal.'

'The players who get silver will be p****d off, they will be upset, and they will be despondent. It's how we are all built and it's frankly how it should be at an elite level. No one got anywhere being happy with defeat.'

'Friends and family will be telling them to be proud of reaching a World Cup final but, for a few weeks at least, the players will not want to listen. No professional athlete wants to come second.'