

What IF: Hearn vs Trinidad

Written by Frank Lotierzo
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It's remarkable how many things Thomas Hearn and Felix Trinidad share along with their great punching power. Both were thought to have a suspect chin by some, both struggled getting down to 147, and both were overshadowed by a superstar fighting in the same division (Leonard & De La Hoya). When breaking down their fighting style and ability some things stand out. Hearn was the more versatile fighter because he could take your head off or move and box at long range from behind his jab. Trinidad is more of a pressure fighter who must push the fight forward to be effective. He cannot fight going back like Hearn could. As far as punching power goes, I'd say Hearn is the better puncher. Along with having a far superior jab, Hearn has a significant advantage as far as right hands go. Hearn put many outstanding fighters to sleep for the count of 10 with one right hand from welterweight up to super middleweight. Tito has the better left hook to the head, but Hearn has the better left hook to the body and their uppercut's are about even. Hearn had faster hands than Trinidad and a huge advantage in reach, but Tito had better basics and was more fundamentally sound.

Some questioned the chin of both fighters, and that may be a bit unfair. Trinidad was down more than a few times but was only stopped by middleweight champ Bernard Hopkins, and that was after taking many big shots during the course of 11 rounds before being stopped in the 12th. Hearn was stopped by Sugar Ray Leonard, former middleweight champ Marvin Hagler and former super middleweight and light heavyweight champ Iran Barkley. However, although Leonard was a very good puncher at welterweight and caught Hearn continuously over the course of 14 rounds, Hearn was still standing at the conclusion of the fight. Hagler fought the best fight of his career the night he fought Hearn and just walked over him. I seriously doubt Trinidad would fare any better than Hearn if he was in there with Hagler that night. Iran Barkley was a very big strong super middleweight and light heavyweight who could punch. Barkley caught lightning in a bottle when he stopped Hearn. Hearn was killing Barkley and got careless and sloppy when Barkley caught him with a desperation right hand that stopped Hearn. They fought at light heavyweight four years later and Barkley won a decision over a shot Hearn. As far as who has the better chin, most would say that Trinidad does. However, I don't see it that clear cut. During his career, Hearn fought better punchers than Trinidad. I don't think that can be disputed. Who did Trinidad fight that could punch like Cuevas, Roldan, Hagler or Barkley? The answer is he didn't. Concluding that Trinidad had the better chin is something that can very easily be debated. As for who faced and beat better opposition, this also has to go to Hearn. The biggest win for Trinidad is De La Hoya and that is very disputed. Hearn soundly beat Cuevas, Duran, Benitez, and Leonard the second time even though it was scored a draw. I would say that rates much higher than Reid, Vargas, and a shot Whitaker.

Who Would Have Won

There are a couple of scenarios that may have unfolded in a Hearn-Trinidad fight. With Trinidad historically being a slow starter and Hearn who usually started very fast, Tito would have been very vulnerable to being drilled by the Hearn's right hand missile and being KO'd early. Yeah, I know you're saying that Trinidad went down early in some fights but always got up. However he never tasted anything like a Hearn's right. Trinidad also showed that he could

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be hit with right hands, and not only was the Hitman's right hand a bomb, it was very fast. One scenario could be Tito coming out and going right at Hearn, like Hagler did, forcing Hearn to retreat. If Trinidad can get Hearn against the ropes, he has a good chance of tagging Hearn with his left hook and possibly stopping him. However, this strategy is dangerous for Trinidad to apply against Hearn because he sets himself up to walk right into Hearn's right hand. No way Trinidad could take the right hands that Hagler had to walk through just to get close enough to be in range to tag Hearn. Another possible scenario is Hearn boxing and keeping his jab in Trinidad's face, making it difficult for him to get to Hearn. This I believe is a style Hearn could resort to when ever he wanted. By Tommy keeping a jab in Tito's face he accomplishes two things. He reduces his chances of getting hit with a big punch, and with Trinidad following him like he did Hopkins, he's always going to be in range for the Hearn's right. Another punch Felix would've been susceptible to while pressuring Hearn is his left hook to the body, which was devastating. Trinidad isn't going to take many of these before he slows down his pursuit of Hearn. In this match up of K.O. artist I have to go with Hearn, he simply has too many things in his arsenal for Trinidad. Looking at it objectively, I just see too many things for Trinidad to overcome.

Trinidad's best chance is to somehow get Hearn to engage in a toe-to-toe slugfest hoping he can land a couple of his powerful left hooks on Hearn's chin and knock him out. However, even this is very dangerous for Trinidad because he has to go out and force a fighter who has a longer reach, faster hands, and better two-handed punching power to trade with him. In this match up, I would pick Hearn to beat Trinidad, and most likely he'd stop him. Hearn has too many checks in his column. He's a better boxer with faster hands, a longer reach, a superior right hand and a more versatile left hand. Hearn can win the fight if it's a slugfest or he can win by boxing and winning by decision, Trinidad can only win by knockout the way I see it. Again I definitely would take Hearn over Trinidad, but Trinidad would be dangerous as long as he was on his feet and could never be counted out of the fight until it was over.

Writers Note

When I thought about this fight at first, I thought what an even match up. I figured it would be hard to favor one side over the other. However, after going over both of their careers, it's not so hard for me to see why Hearn has to be favored. There is absolutely no doubt that he fought and defeated significantly better opposition, he has many more impressive knockouts against better fighters than Trinidad and without a doubt he's proven that he is the better puncher. If you examine fighting styles, Hearn has a big edge here. He has faster hands and can beat you slugging or boxing, he can fight moving away from his opponent, or he can go after him. Trinidad can only fight going forward and can be out boxed. Trinidad is also at a disadvantage because of Hearn's long reach advantage. I just don't see how Trinidad could be picked over Hearn if both are at their best. When I started this comparison, I thought it was much more even than it really is.