

## Atlas Maps Out Grant's Future

Written by Steve Kim

Wednesday, 22 January 2003 21:00

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This Friday night former heavyweight challenger Michael Grant takes on journeyman Carlton Johnson. Outside the couple of thousand that are to show the First Center Union in Philadelphia, many others not too will be able to see Grant riding fight streak) (currently a five winning back in action.

It's a long way from the bright lights and the exposure that Grant once fought under on a regular basis. Remember, it was just a couple of years ago that Grant was HBO's the hulking heir apparent and was hailed as 'the heavyweight of the new millennium'. That is until he was rushed into a fight with Lennox Lewis and stopped short in two rounds. Like a piece of fine china, he was dropped and shattered into a thousand little pieces.

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More than a year later, those thousand fragments would be pieced together and put back into the ring against Jameel McCline, in what was thought to be a comeback fight on his way to bigger and better things. This time he would be armed with a new trainer, the esteemed Teddy Atlas. But he wasn't much help as Grant was dumped to the canvas in less than 15 seconds with the first punch fracturing his ankle in the process. In two fights, his stock plummeted faster than Enron. Grant had hit rock bottom twice. But he decided to give his career one last chance at legitimacy and after recovering from his fractured ankle, he would embark on a series of comeback fights. We would say that some 'gimme's' he took but the fact of the matter is, we're not sure state in his mind that there was any

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fight that could  
be considered one for  
an easy him. But slowly he has started  
to climb out of his hole;  
and this past August  
he took a decisive step  
up in class by knocking  
out fringe contender Robert  
Davis in three rounds  
in front of a national audience  
on ESPN.  
For Grant, it was  
a significant  
step in the right  
direction.  
So now they move  
on to bigger  
and better things  
right?  
Actually, they took  
a step back by  
fighting James  
Walton in  
early November  
in Washington D.C.,  
stopping Walton  
in four.  
And now, they're  
taking on Johnson, another unknown  
and relatively safe fighter.  
And it's just  
the way Atlas planned it.  
" You gotta be honest,"  
he says." I think we dropped  
back a lil' bit but not  
by accident.  
What I really felt like after  
the Robert Davis fight was that  
I wanted to evaluate  
what I saw.  
And I

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saw some good things, but I also saw  
need tightened some things to be that  
I'd be if I stepped inconsistencies, I thought up, some and so  
in the way I'm . I believe ahead going about  
towards this it and my philosophies business; and you have to  
right or wrong, believe in it if you're the  
it." one who's leading  
Atlas, after the knockout in his first  
loss to McCline, bout training Grant, took  
making in Grant's over the decision matchmaking  
Hamilton from managers and Jim Thomas. Craig  
from the Atlas, very beginning,  
that his had doubted new fighter for a  
was ready fighter of McCline's  
so soon. caliber And Atlas even now  
is hesitant to push the  
envelope looking ahead.  
" With his lack of background, a title fight,  
and moving to and then the  
devastating two losses in I feel Michael  
a row and everything; needs time obviously  
in the gym to develop and

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then develop in proper fights. Off of  
the Davis I thought took a forward he  
fight, that he nice step from where he  
was. But  
there were some things see better, consistent with."  
I wanted to become more  
The word 'consistency' is used over by Atlas in  
and over again talking about  
his fighter. In short, he it from him his performance  
wants more of and even in with Davis, quite enough  
he didn't see of it. After a strong one against he  
would listlessly focus second- a loud earning  
reprimand trainer- stopping in the Davis next  
round. the second that made proceed Atlas with  
caution. " I felt, let a little bit," of his thoughts said Atlas, after the Davis  
in the gym again win." And work and see if I to be more consistent  
can get him

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and add to the areas that I saw were good and the areas that I thought he drifted a little bit and that he could at. See if he can be consistent before he gets to the next level. To me, that's the way you do it. That's the way I feel comfortable developing a fighter and training a fighter."

So next came a fight off of TV against Walton. " We had the fight in Washington. I felt that I was right, there was still some inconsistencies in that fight," Atlas says." Now, we're gonna fight we got where a game front guy in of him, who's gonna come forward a level but he's below Davis. And now, I'm gonna see- and just care I don't about but I want to see how he wins. I wanna see how he looks, I wanna see the things we've been working on in the gym."

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And Atlas insists that he will not move up to the next level just based on wins. He must see development and of course, consistency. " It's always about the fighter getting better to me. My bottom line is being and the a teacher most important is your thing fighter getting said Atlas, better," who's got some currently time off from his on other ESPN2 gig as their 'Friday Night Fight' series is in three the midst of a week hiatus." Look, I know I don't have forever to do this, he's 30 years old, I got him at a certain point in his career, I know that. " But I'm still not going to ignore the fact that there are he still certain areas that develop. needs time to I'm going to give much time it as as I can in practical and then terms I still that I understand need to step forward and be

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able to apply certain I understand  
it within time frames- that."  
" But my first and foremost going to be  
priority is my fighter being consistent  
in he needs to the area's that be, becoming can become.  
as good as he Forget the  
styles about of the there, pick spots with  
guys out I can out there but I himself as solid can  
guys, want Michael to become as he become a certain term of  
possibly within practical time."  
Ok, but where does he see in six months?  
his fighter  
" I'm looking at stepping fight," he answers."  
up to an ESPN-type I'm looking the summer, fringes of the the kind of  
for him, by to be on the HBO-fights, guys you gotta kind of spots.  
fight in those To be able to show that he on  
that level." can be consistent

FRIDAY NIGHT

FIGHTS



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Also on that card with Grant is Anthony Thompson, a young welterweight out of Philly, who is now 7-0 and considered one of the best prospects in boxing.

### THUNDER CLOUDS

The IBF in their latest ratings has placed Arturo Gatti as it's welterweight, top ranked jr. which perhaps brings us a step closer to a bout with undisputed champion Kostya Tszyu.

But then there's again, no way this bout ever goes to a purse bid and the question would there be if is enough either money from Showtime HBO or to satisfy both sides.

### SUGAR FIX

Bob Arum has put out an ultimatum to Shane Mosley to officially sign on the dotted line for his September 13th rematch with Oscar De La Hoya, or they will proceed to go through a bout with Fernando Vargas. with a return

Why the rush to make Mosley sign? Well, it seems

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that Mosley, who's  
a bit  
unhappy with the  
\$4 million he is  
set to receive  
against Hoya, De La  
has made overtures  
to Don King,  
setting off alarms  
with Arum  
and anyone else involved  
in De La Hoya-Mosley  
II.