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Throughout boxing history, the heavyweight division has always been the signature division. The saying, "as goes the heavyweight division, so goes boxing" has been beat to death. Unfortunately, it is true. Only the real boxing fans know who the top fighters are in the divisions below heavyweight, besides the obvious superstars like Roy Jones and Oscar De La Hoya. Another boxing cliche that has been worn out is the one where it's always being stated how bad the current heavyweight division is. A topic that definitely doesn't need to be addressed again.

The positive aspect about the heavyweight division dominating the other weight divisions, is that it takes the spotlight off of them when they are bad. Which has been the case over the last 10-12 years. The dearth of outstanding fighters in the middleweight and light heavyweight divisions has not been a focal point. But the fact is these two glamor divisions are very bad at this time.

Today's boxing landscaped is stacked with quality fighters from featherweight to junior middleweight. From 126 to 154, boxing is littered with some outstanding fighters and a few greats. However, if you take a close look at the middleweight and light heavyweight divisions, the same cannot be said. The middleweight and light heavyweight divisions feature two all-time great champions in Bernard Hopkins and Roy Jones, but that's it.

I have often heard it said that these two divisions look so inept because Jones and Hopkins are so terrific. There may be something to that, but I don't buy it totally. Granted, Jones and Hopkins are both great fighters, but other past great light heavyweight and middleweight champions have dominated in much deeper eras. Michael Spinks and Marvin Hagler to name two.

Today when there is a light heavyweight fight that features two of the top contenders, it's actually hard on the eyes. In his title winning effort prior to fighting Roy Jones, top contender Antonio Tarver decisioned former title holder Montell Griffin. This fight typifies the so so standard of boxing that has become the norm for fights in the light heavyweight division not involving Jones. In the Tarver-Griffin bout, Tarver did nothing but lunge forward throwing nothing but one-twos, in hopes of ending the fight with one punch. Griffin did nothing but lay back and try to counter Tarver with big overhand rights, again, in hopes of ending the bout with one punch. Griffin, actually fought as if he didn't find out that Tarver had the much greater height and reach advantage until standing at ring center listening to the referees instructions. Neither Tarver or Griffin did anything in this bout to distinguish themselves as anything more than two main event fighters.

The scenario in the middleweight division is the same as it is in the light heavyweight division. When there is a fight between two of the top contenders, the two fighters look nothing more than ordinary. In his last major fight before fighting undisputed middleweight champ Bernard Hopkins, former champ William Joppy decisioned undefeated contender Howard Eastman. This fight was nothing more than a fight and was just as hard on the eyes as the Tarver-Griffin fight. Again, neither fighter did anything to stand out, and most likely all that saw it had forgotten it by

the next day?

The fact of the matter is the light heavyweight and middleweight divisions today are dreadful. If you really think about it, they are only one fighter deep. The light heavyweight division's outlook really looks bleak. Most fans and writers today look upon Ring Magazine's rankings as the best and most legitimate. As of this writing, Ring Magazine's top 5 ranked light heavyweights after Roy Jones are, 1-Antonio Tarver, 2-Julio Gonzalez, 3-Dariusz Michalczewski, 4-Glencoffe Johnson, and 5-Eric Harding.

The best of those five is Tarver. However, at age 35 Tarver's best days are probably behind him. And there have been some rumblings that he's going to challenge Chris Byrd sometime in 2004. Forget about Michalczewski and Johnson. Michalczewski is 35 and shot, and never was that spectacular. Johnson is 34 and has shown at best, he's a good fighter. Gonzalez, at 27 is probably the brightest star in the light heavyweight division. He has been in with the best, and outside of Jones has held more than his own with them. But after Gonzalez, who is there? That's been the problem with the light heavyweight's since the mid to late eighties.

In the middleweight division, the theme is repeated. Ring's top 5 ranked middleweights behind Hopkins are, 1-William Joppy, 2-Howard Eastman, 3-Robert Allen, 4-Rodney Jones, and 5-Sergey Tatevosyan. Of those five, who is the fighter that can carry the interest in the division after Hopkins? Joppy is 33 and is probably going to retire after being taken apart by Hopkins in his last fight. Howard Eastman is 32 going on 33, and he has nothing for Hopkins. And even without Hopkins in the division, Eastman is nothing close to being a special fighter, let alone outstanding or great? Third behind Hopkins is Robert Allen. Allen has already lost to Hopkins twice, and at 34, where's he going? Rodney Jones is a former junior middleweight who figured he could advance better fighting in the no-name middleweight division. On top of that, he couldn't get past Harry Simon? Sergey Tatevosyan has beaten nobody, and lost to the best fighter he fought.

That leaves number 6, Jermaine Taylor. Unlike the light heavyweight division which shows no signs of life after Roy Jones, the middleweight division does have life after Bernard Hopkins. He is Jermaine Taylor. Taylor is 18-0 and has shown all the things you could ask for in an up and coming prospect. As long as Taylor is not matched with Hopkins any time soon, the middleweight division could be his. The problem is other than Taylor, who is there?

For any division to garner the publics attention, there must be some compelling match-ups that can be made. With only one outstanding fighter in the division, it's impossible to have a Super-Fight. Today's light heavyweight and middleweight divisions are in bad shape. After Jones and Hopkins, there is no reason to watch or care about them with maybe the exception of Taylor. Even at that, who can Taylor fight down the road which could create fan Interest? Maybe fellow former Olympian Jeff Lacy, but Lacy will probably end up fighting at 175. And if Lacy goes to 175, he'll face the same dilemma Taylor will be facing at 160? Not enough challengers to capture the interest of the boxing public?