

Antonio Tarver: Shut Up And Fight

Written by Frank Lotierzo

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In a recent boxing publication, top ranked Light Heavyweight Antonio Tarver was quoted as saying the following, "Roy bring your ass - and bring my belt." Please Antonio, don't subject boxing fans to anymore of your hollow threats and insults. Maybe if you keep popping off at the mouth you just might convince one or two that you actually had claim to the majority decision you lost to Light Heavyweight Champ Roy Jones last November. Even though you didn't deserve it. Yes Antonio, Roy beat you last time out. No, he didn't dominate you or take you apart, but he definitely deserved the majority decision he was awarded.

First of all, Roy will definitely bring it this time, and the belts he's bringing are his not yours. Ya know why they're not yours? Because you weren't quite good enough last time to do anything about it. In case you forgot Antonio, you had Roy Jones on what very well may have been the worst night of his life in the ring. On the other hand, it was possibly the best you ever were on any night of your career, and you still couldn't finish it. Ya know why? Because you swallowed the apple in the big spot, that's why.

If you were a real champ, you would've found a way to win the last two rounds of the fight. Roy certainly sucked it up and did what he had to do in order to regain what was rightfully his, the undisputed Light Heavyweight Championship. Jones fought and willed himself like all the greats have had to do down the stretch of a big fight at sometime during their career. Jones wasn't happy being competitive on a night he had nothing. Opposed to you who was just happy to mouth off after the fight. See you were happy saying I fought Roy Jones and didn't get taken apart. That's exactly why you're the challenger in the rematch.

Antonio, the last time out Roy was an empty package. In his last fight he was a Heavyweight and had put on just about 25 pounds of muscle. In order to take your title he had to shed those 25 pounds of muscle. As everyone saw, he wasn't himself, which indirectly paved the way for you to run your big mouth again. After ten rounds the fight was dead even, 5 rounds a piece. The fight and title came down to the 11th and 12th rounds. Back in the day, rounds 11 thru 15 were known as Ali's alley. That's were the Champs sucked it up down the stretch in order to prove they were worthy of being thought of as great fighters and Champions. Today it's the 11th and 12th rounds that encompass Ali's alley. And like Ali, Jones went out there and sucked it up on a night that the only thing he had in the tank was his will to win. And like Ali he was awarded a close, but deserved decision.

You talked so tough and cocky before the fight, it was if you knew you weren't going to get all of Jones. And you didn't, and he still beat you. I have fought and been in the ring enough, never at your level, but enough to know when a fighter is going through the motions to try and jive the judges and fans into thinking he's really raising hell, when in fact he's not. You were just trying to con Jones and the rest of us. You didn't, maybe some, but a lot of us, no. If you were really the big time Champ that you say you are, you would've went after Roy in those last two rounds, because he was there to be had. Instead you fought in spurts when you knew it was safe after he did all the work. See, you were afraid to lay it all out because you just didn't want to get

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stopped or beaten soundly. It was also obvious that Jones' body attack did a number on you which is partly why you were winded down the stretch. So you fought just enough to make it look good and at the same time kept yourself from being exposed.

Sadly enough Antonio, you'll look back at those last two rounds and want to kick yourself because you didn't take a shot to be something special. Forget what the judges scored. You go out and fight those last two rounds as if your life depends on it, and the fight is yours and everybody knows it. Maybe if you did that, I could at least tolerate hearing your school yard bully talk. What was it Ali said, "it ain't bragging if you do it."

However, I saw the fight and now know that what you say are just words. Guess what, you ain't beating Jones with just words. Couldn't do it last time and it will be even harder this time. I have no doubt that Jones knows what type of fighter you are on the inside as well. Only this time he'll be more prepared mentally and physically.

In the last fight he was dead at the weight. On top of that I believe he underestimated you and didn't fully realize that your size and style could present him a few problems. Now you don't have those factors in your favor. Now he knows that he'll be in real shape this time, instead of just making weight. He'll also be more ready and have a more solid attack plan that he can execute this time.

And lastly he knows you. He knows that when the pressure is turned up in the big spot, you'll back down and just try to live through it. In others words he knows you don't have the "kill or be killed" mind set. In the last fight he gave you just enough that even though you thought, hey, he's not all that tonight. He still put just enough seed of doubt in your mind that he had you thinking, I don't think he is all there tonight, but what if he is? And that's exactly what Jones wanted Tarver to think. Jones wanted Tarver to fight not to lose instead of fighting to win, and he did. Jones knew if Tarver fought not to look bad, then he didn't have to be perfect offensively to get him to back off, which he did when he made Tarver think he was raising the rent.

Now we are getting close to the rematch that Tarver has been clamoring for. Again his big mouth is writing checks that his heart and fist probably can't cash. I hate ripping a World Class fighter like Antonio Tarver. However, his bravado is almost beyond belief. It's all most hard to believe that someone who fought like he did would talk so tough. To me he shows his cards every time he says how people come up to him at the airport and grocery store and say "There's the guy that kicked Roy Jones Ass." Hey Antonio, anybody who says you kicked Roy Jones Ass, either is your relative, or is blind and has no boxing acumen at all. What you did was give him a good run, but coughed it up in the end. Yet you walk around and act as if you're the champ. Who are you fooling. I've seen a few fights in the last year where the loser had a much better claim to having deserved the decision more so than you. In fact Fres Oquendo has a better case versus Chris Byrd than you do versus Jones. At least Fres was in with a fighter who wasn't dead at the weight like Jones was against you.

In this upcoming rematch with Jones, Mr. Tarver better bring a lot more than he did last time out. I've never been impressed with Tarver as a physical talent, he's a good fighter but that's about it. And his gaff in the Olympics shows that in the big spot he's not all that. He's just lucky

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that Jones is the only fighter at 175 today that is anything special/great.

The light Heavyweight division has never been so bad in it's 101 year history. The way Tarver talks you'd think he was Bob Foster or Michael Spinks. In my opinion I'd make the best Foster and Spinks a slight favorite over the best Roy Jones. If forced to pick, I'd pick both Foster and Spinks to defeat Jones, most likely by decision. That being said, even they are not at a level where they could disrespect Jones like Tarver continues to do?

Count your blessings Antonio, you have two things in your favor. Your style will give Jones a little trouble, and Roy is starting to show signs of Father Time catching up with him, but that won't be enough for you to get by him on May 15th. If Antonio Tarver fights against Roy Jones as good as he's talked over the last six months, Jones will be in for the fight of his life. And if Tarver gives Jones the fight of his life, then he's earned the right to chirp and you won't hear a peep out of me. Until then, his redderick is nothing more than hot air. Win the fight in the ring this time Antonio. If you do that, we'll all sing your praise and pay you homage.

Overall I do like Antonio Tarver the person and the fighter. However, I find his ranting tiresome and tedious. I don't think his showing in the last fight versus Jones affords him the blanket pass that he does regarding his popping off. Maybe he's trying to get into Jones' head, maybe, but does anyone believe he can beat Jones mentally? I don't. I think he has to do it in the ring. That's why I wish he'd "Shut Up And Fight."