

Roy Jones Is In A Big-Spot In Rematch with Tarver

Written by Frank Lotierzo
Thursday, 13 May 2004 18:00

Joe Louis mastered them, Marvin Hagler was also sensational in them. They are rematches against fighters that either beat or gave a supposed great a tough time the last time they met. Unlike many past greats over the years, Antonio Tarver represents only the second rematch of Roy Jones career. Roy has only been in this situation once before. That was back in 1997 when he was DQ'd in a fight versus the undefeated Montell Griffin. In the fight with Griffin, Jones was a little thrown by Griffin's crouching style early on. Finally after figuring Griffin out, Jones dropped him and hit him while he was down out of frustration, thus losing by disqualification. When they met five months later, Jones scored what may have been the most impressive victory of his career when he devastated Griffin in the first round.

On May 15th 2004, Jones faces the only man who some feel actually bettered him in a fist fight, Antonio Tarver. I personally scored the fight for Jones 7-5 in rounds. On my card it was dead even after ten rounds, but I believe Jones clearly won the last two rounds. The official decision was ruled in favor of Jones by a majority decision by the scores of 117-111, 116-112, and 114-114. Although I had Jones winning, I think 117-111 is outrageous, and 116-112 isn't too far behind. Again the fight was very close, but in my opinion a Jones win by a slight margin. If Tarver wins the last round on my card, it's a draw. I gave Jones the last round so he wins the fight, end of story? Not really.

There are more than a few who watched the fight that feel Tarver got the better of it. This was a fight that after it was over, Jones was marked up and puffy. This is something that had never happened to Roy Jones before in 50 professional fights. If you couple the fact that Jones was marked up along with the fact that he didn't set himself apart from Tarver, than Jones still has something to prove versus Tarver to some Boxing fans and writers/historians. This is what makes the fight so intriguing. Jones has never gone into a fight before where he wasn't an odds on favorite at least in the mind of the Boxing public. So basically you can say that for maybe only the second time in his career, he has something to prove. The only other time he had something to prove was when he challenged WBA Heavyweight Champ John Ruiz back in March of 2003. In the fight versus Ruiz, Jones totally outclassed him and proved he was a fighter for the ages when he won a one sided decision.

However, this rematch with Tarver is different. These two have already met and shared a ring for 12 rounds. In those 12 rounds there wasn't a whole lot to choose between them. If nothing else, Tarver proved that he belongs in there with Jones. That sounds all fine and dandy but, there is another side to the story. In Jones' last fight before Tarver, he bulked up anywhere from 20-25 pounds so he could challenge Ruiz. Eight months later, he had to shed the muscle he put on to challenge for Tarver's Lt. Heavyweight title. The weight didn't come off easily for Jones who thought that after Ruiz he'd be fighting Mike Tyson. In fact Jones had to drop 11 pounds in the last 48 hours before the weigh in for the fight with Tarver. Many speculated that Jones may be effected by the dramatic weight loss, and he was.

Anyone who saw Jones and how he looked physically against Antonio Tarver last November

Roy Jones Is In A Big-Spot In Rematch with Tarver

Written by Frank Lotierzo
Thursday, 13 May 2004 18:00

can only draw one conclusion, he was not himself. His body looked hollow and empty. He didn't seem to exude the confidence that he normally does. And it wasn't because he feared or had any doubt about Tarver. Maybe once the fight got under way, he was somewhat surprised by Tarver's ability to offset his speed and reflexes. However, I think it was more that he knew he wasn't all there physically. Fighters lie to the fans and media and say they feel great even when they really don't, but they can't lie to themselves, I can't help but believe Jones knew the truth inside. He actually had the Riddick Bowe look in the rematch with Golota. In other words the scale says I'm in shape by what it registers. Bowe had to drop 50 pounds for the rematch with Golota, and although it looked and sounded like he was fight ready, he wasn't. Same with Jones. He didn't focus on Boxing, he focused on losing weight and getting down to 175. There is no way anyone with a morsel of objectivity can deny that Jones wasn't himself in the first Tarver bout. It's not an excuse, it's a fact.

In the fight with Tarver, Jones relied on his will and experience to pull out a very close and tough fight. He was definitely there to be beat. As Larry Merchant recently said, Tarver let a great opportunity pass him by. Again, Jones knew how to bluff Tarver out of really picking it up, and ultimately it probably gave him the fight. A tired Jones did what a shot 35 year old Muhammad Ali did to Earnie Shavers in his last title defense. That is con him into thinking that although I may look spent, it's really a ploy to set you up for a big shot or a trap. Too bad Antonio and Earnie bought the store. Had they both pressed it they would've found out that all Ali and Jones had on those nights in question was there heart and Championship will to win. The only magic that either Ali or Jones had in the bag that night was the ability to convince Sharvers and Tarver not to go for it. Which is why Tarver lost the title and Shavers didn't capture it.

Well now Jones has no excuses. He has been training and working out with conditioning guru Mackie Shillstone. On top of that Jones knows that Tarver has the capacity to fight with him. Roy has earned the right to get the benefit of the doubt in that he wasn't all there last time. I'll give Tarver credit for causing him fits, but Jones not having all his tools sharpened had as much or more to do with it. This time Roy will be as good as he can be. He knows that this fight will be one of the signature fights of his career, a rematch against an opponent who he hasn't defeated beyond all doubt . Remember, he is going in against a fighter who did fight him on almost even terms, and a fighter that who on the outside exudes monumental confidence.

No one believed that Montell Griffin belonged in the same ring with Jones going into their rematch. By the time Jones finally dropped Griffin in their first fight, he was really starting to clean up on him. The devastating end in the rematch didn't really surprise anyone. In this rematch versus Tarver, that is not the case. Tarver fought him damn near even over 12 rounds. Not at anytime during those 12 rounds did Jones prove that he was on a different level than Tarver. So Tarver is basically the only fighter that Jones has yet to prove in the ring that he is better than. Jones has no excuses this time. He basically has to beat Tarver soundly and prove that when he is right, he and Tarver are not in the same league?

I say heading into this fight Jones deserves the benefit of the doubt. Assuming Jones is in peak shape and determined to set the record straight, at least according to him, he has to be considered a significant favorite to come out on top. That being said, until Jones does it in the

Roy Jones Is In A Big-Spot In Rematch with Tarver

Written by Frank Lotierzo
Thursday, 13 May 2004 18:00

ring, the doubt will linger over him. He must dispatch Tarver in a solid fashion or his detractors will always bring it up when placing him historically.

Roy Jones is a very unique fighter in many ways. One of them is that here he is in what will be his 51st fight, and it's the first time that he has just as much to prove as his opponent. If for some reason Jones never fought Tarver again, he would be the only fighter that Jones didn't prove he was better than. There would actually be some questions asked of Jones that he never really answered. That's why this fight is huge for Jones. In my opinion Jones is an all-time great without question regardless of what happens versus Antonio Tarver on May 15th, but if Jones loses or doesn't impress, some will try and tarnish his whole career, which would be laughable. This upcoming fight with Tarver is without a doubt one of the Big-spots in the career of Roy Jones.

Roy Jones is a fighter who will be talked about for years after he is gone. Where he rates historically will always be a spirited debate. As with most fighters, he'll be overrated by many, and underrated by just as many. Too those who think that I have been blowing kisses at Roy Jones, you couldn't be more wrong. In fact I tend to underrate him according to those who know me best. It's just that I don't think Tarver is anything special. His claim to fame may go on to be that he could fight Roy Jones and not get taken apart, we'll see.

As far as rating Jones, nothing that happens in the Tarver fight will change anything as far as I'm concerned. He is without a doubt one of the top six or seven Light Heavyweights ever. Without listing all who I think would've defeated him or given him a tough time, I'll name three in the last 35 years. I would pick both Bob Foster and Michael Spinks to beat him and also rate them above him. I rate him above Qawi but, I would also be more than tempted to pick the best Dwight Muhammad Qawi to possibly beat him. At least the one that tore apart Saad Muhammad back in 1981 and 1982. Remember, I think Sugar Ray Leonard at Welterweight was a better fighter than Jones at any weight. I also think Jones has faced one of the weakest crops of fighters in the history of the Middleweight and Light Heavyweight division. The fact that Tarver is his most worthy opponent at 175 says a lot about the rest of his competition at 175. It's just that I don't think Tarver is anything outstanding, and most likely would've lost to the likes of Marvin Johnson and Yaqui Lopez.