

Antonio Tarver: He Backed It Up This Time

Written by Frank Lotierzo
Sunday, 16 May 2004 18:00

It ain't bragging if you do it." That phrase was coined by former Heavyweight Champ Muhammad Ali back in the 1960's. It basically means you can pop off at the mouth as long as your actions back up your words. Heading into their first fight, Light Heavyweight Champ Antonio Tarver shot his mouth off about what he was going to do to Roy Jones. In their first fight I felt Tarver fought tentative and somewhat glove shy. Tarver had Jones on the brink of defeat and didn't finish the fight like the Champion he proclaimed himself to be. Too me Tarver's lack of grit and determination cost him the fight enabling Jones to pull it out.

Heading into their rematch Tarver picked up the same verbal redderick as the first fight. Basically, Tarver was disrespecting and putting Jones down again. I found much fault with that based on how he fought down the stretch of their previous fight. Well that's history now because in the rematch Tarver did what he said he was going to do. Tarver actually backed up his words with action and devastated Roy Jones in two rounds recapturing the Light Heavyweight title. All I can say is my hat goes off to Mr. Tarver. In my opinion Antonio Tarver has earned the right to brag and pop off at the mouth because he did exactly what he said he was going to do, he kicked Roy Jones' ass. Something that he didn't do back in November of 2003.

Now Tarver must get all due praise for beating Jones beyond all doubt. On top of that Jones has no excuses, at least that are legitimate. He knew what he was up against this time regarding Tarver. Jones and Tarver shared a ring for 12 rounds six months ago and in that fight neither fighter distinguished himself superior over the other. Only the last time Jones had something he doesn't have this time, a legitimate excuse. Last time Jones had to drop 20-25 pounds prior to the fight. The drastic weight loss left him weak and drained, thus hindering his performance during the fight. That was not an excuse last time, it was a fact. Any objective observer could see that Jones was drawn and not the same fighter that Boxing fans had grown accustomed to seeing.

Roy Jones does not have that same luxury this time around. No, this time Jones employed a fitness guru to help him get in great condition. He also had plenty of time to Box and game plan for Tarver, who showed in the last fight that he had a style to give Jones some difficulty. No, Jones has no excuses this time. Tarver beat him fair and square in a very spectacular fashion in the rematch. Tarver showed that he wasn't just speaking words this time by living up to all the bluster he had promised.

On May 15th 2004, Antonio Tarver showed up on a mission. His mission was to prove that he is a better fighter than Roy Jones. His mission was to erase all doubt and leave no unanswered questions. Mission accomplished. In this rematch Tarver not only erased all questions about who is the better fighter between him and Jones, but he did it on a very big night. What makes this even more special for Tarver is that he did it on a night when the burden of proof was on Jones as much as himself. In this fight Tarver was going to get the best of what Jones had to offer. This was because Jones superiority over another fighter had never been questioned before heading into a fight. Throughout Jones' career, it was always assumed that he was the

Antonio Tarver: He Backed It Up This Time

Written by Frank Lotierzo
Sunday, 16 May 2004 18:00

master fighter. It wasn't a case of if he was going to win, but more like when and how. This was certainly not the case versus Tarver because Jones really didn't prove he was the better man in their first fight. For the rematch it was assumed, and rightly so that Jones was definitely bringing his A-game.

In this fight Jones had to have his best because he had a lot on the line. For many this was a career defining fight for Jones. He had to prove he was the better man against Tarver, and he couldn't. Despite being ready for Tarver this time, Jones got taken apart in a fashion that no Boxing fan could've ever imagined. This is a huge win for Tarver. Even though Jones is not what he was two or three years ago, Antonio must be paid homage for beating Jones on a night where Jones had the most to lose. In many facets this was the biggest fight of Jones' career. Jones had to prove that he was the better man against the only fighter who had ever fought him to a virtual standstill in 50 fights. Tarver saw to it that Jones didn't make a statement in the Biggest Spot of his career, and now he's the Light Heavyweight Champ with all the bragging rights any fighter could ever hope to have.

Going into the Jones-Tarver rematch, I definitely felt that Tarver was more than capable of giving Jones a very tough competitive fight, but never did I imagine he was capable of knocking him out. He did what he said he would and can chirp about it all he wants, it's no longer just hollow words. To those like myself who wished he'd shut up prior to the rematch with Jones, now we have to shut up. You won't hear a peep out of me. Tarver beat Roy Jones in a Big Spot, something many including myself didn't think he would do.

Antonio Tarver has gained my respect as being the World's top Light Heavyweight. The fact that he destroyed Roy Jones in one of his signature fights is a monumental accomplishment. That being said, I'm not ready to declare him one of the all time great Light Heavyweight Champions in history. Just the best of today. Although I'm absolutely certain that there is a faction out there that will already speculate on how he could've beat the likes of Bob Foster and Michael Spinks. Today it is in fashion to declare a fighter an all-time great based off of one impressive fight. It happened with Wladimir Klitschko, it happened with Naseem Hamed, it happened with Ricardo Mayorga, no doubt it will happen with Antonio Tarver.