

## Now or Never for Hasim Rahman

Written by Rick Folstad  
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At 31, Hasim Rahman isn't exactly closing in on the twilight of his boxing career. He just seems to be treating it that way, giving it one of those "now or never" options that always sound good at the time.

Rahman says he likes to compare his future to a baseball game and right now, he's got two strikes against him, and Australia's Kali Meehan is standing on the mound going into his windup.

Rahman says he can't afford to go down swinging.

"I've never been in the position I'm in now," said Rahman (39-5-1, 32 KOs), who fights Meehan on Nov. 13 at Madison Square Garden on a pay-per-view card that features four heavyweight fights. "I have no other choice. I have to win. I have only one more strike. But I feel like I'm learning, and I'm looking forward to going into the gym now. It will be a beautiful night for me."

If Meehan (29-2, 23 KOs) pulls the upset, it won't be so beautiful. Maybe that's why Rahman upped the stakes, tossed a promise into the fray.

"I will not put on the gloves again if I lose this fight," he said, sounding almost like he meant it.

Don't hold him to it.

While most of the heavyweight division likes to fight once or twice a year, Rahman has fought and won four times since March 11, including a win over Alfred Cole. They weren't all big names, but they were warm bodies who know how to throw punches, and they still count when you tally up his record and his history. Besides, keeping busy keeps you in shape.

"I believe I'm capable of being the most exciting heavyweight in the world," Rahman said. "It's all about what you've done lately, and "lately" for me is now."

Against Meehan, Rahman will be facing a guy coming off a split-decision loss to WBO heavyweight champ Lamon Brewster just a couple months ago. The close loss to Brewster helped heal a devastating first-round TKO loss to Danny Williams in June 2001.

"At the beginning of the fight (with Williams), I thought to myself, 'he's so easy to hit,'" Meehan said.

Right.

"Then I got hit."

After that, he got hit again.

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"I've got no excuses," Meehan said. "He won fair and square. But I learned a lot from that fight."

Like how it feels to get knocked silly.

The underdog against Rahman, Meehan is like a kid making his first trip to Disney World. He says he's just happy to be here, thrilled to be a part of the fight card Don King is calling "Rendezvous with Destiny: Battle for Supremacy."

"I'm honored to be in this mix," Meehan said from his training headquarters in Australia. "Few people give me a chance against Rahman and I expect and accept that. But few people gave me a chance against Lamon Brewster."

Few people in this country even know who Kali Meehan is.

"The ball is still rolling for me," he went on. "I want to prove I can fight at this level."

All he has to do now is pick the ball up and throw it past Rahman.