

Larry Donald's Best And Last Chance

Written by Frank Lotierzo

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It was in January of 1993 that former U.S. Olympian Larry Donald turned pro. Since turning pro Donald has compiled a record of 41-3-2 (24). That's a pretty impressive record. However, Donald is best known for losing in the big spot versus the upper-tier heavyweights he's fought. No, he's never been embarrassed or devastated, he's just never won.

In 46 fights as a pro Donald has won a few regional titles, but hasn't fought for a piece of the world title even once. His best wins probably came within a month of each other when he decisioned Jeremy Williams in March and stopped Bert Cooper in April of 1994. His record says he beat former two time heavyweight champ Tim Witherspoon. But that was a 39 year old Witherspoon back in December of 1997, who was nothing close to the same fighter who lost a disputed decision to heavyweight champion Larry Holmes in May of 1983.

Donald was quoted earlier this week saying, "I'm still trying to be the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world." At age 37 that doesn't appear to be realistic for Donald. However, a win in his next fight may put him closer to a title shot than he's ever been in his career. On November 13th, Donald will fight former four time heavyweight champ Evander Holyfield 38-7-5 (25) at Madison Square Garden in New York City. For the record, the 42 year old Holyfield is also trying to become the undisputed heavyweight champion.

Larry Donald should consider himself lucky. If there was ever a fight for him to finally clear the hurdle and earn a title shot, it's November 13th against Holyfield. Fighting Evander Holyfield in Madison Square Garden on a card that will feature at least half of the world's top ten ranked heavyweights is about as good as it could get for Donald, especially at age 37. If he doesn't bring his A-game and fight with a sense of urgency against a totally shot Holyfield, shame on him.

At his best Evander Holyfield was an all-time great fighter and would have been a threat to win the title during any era in heavyweight history. In fact, only one fighter has captured the heavyweight title since the end of the Ali era who ranks above Holyfield in my opinion, Larry Holmes. Luckily for Larry Donald that Holyfield is long gone. The only thing remaining in the Holyfield of 2004 is the name. Evander hasn't been anything close to the great fighter he once was since November of 1997 when he stopped Michael Moorer in defense of his WBA and WBC titles.

At 6'4" and weighing in the 225-230 pound range, aided by an 81 inch reach, Donald has plenty of things in his arsenal to give Holyfield a tough night, provided he's in great shape. At this stage of his career, Holyfield has no legs, is vulnerable to a sustained body attack, and is barely capable of fighting in spurts let alone a full round. In all honesty, Holyfield hasn't fought a full round in since his first fight with Mike Tyson in November of 1996.

Maybe the biggest thing Donald has going for him is the fact that Holyfield can't get his punches off. In his last fight against James Toney, this was painfully obvious. Some think it was Toney

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who made Holyfield look bad. I disagree, and here's why. During his fight with Toney, there were several times that Toney was right there in front of Holyfield and wasn't punching or moving. And despite not having to look for him or facing any resistance, Holyfield still couldn't pull the trigger. You could actually see him going through the thought process of what he wanted to do. By the time he was finally set, Toney either beat him to the punch or was gone.

This is the opportunity of a lifetime for Larry Donald. This isn't Riddick Bowe of 1994, or an undefeated Kirk Johnson who is standing in his path. The last time Donald was on the verge of getting a title shot, he was stopped for the first time in his career by Vitali Klitschko in the 10th round. Now Vitali is the WBC heavyweight champ and thought to be the most formidable heavyweight in the world by many of boxing's top observers.

The Evander Holyfield who will look to win his first fight in over two years against Larry Donald can no longer fight at anything close to the championship level. Holyfield's last victory came against Hasim Rahman back in June of 2002. However, beating him and having his name in your win column still carries clout. Chris Byrd solidified his title claim by out-boxing a severely eroded Holyfield in December of 2002. James Toney is now the hottest fighter in the heavyweight division, based mainly off of his victory over an even more spent version of Holyfield than the one Byrd beat a year earlier.

Larry Donald has never fought for the heavyweight title and is considered by many to be an underachiever. A win over Holyfield almost guarantees him a fight with one of the three heavyweight champs promoted by Don King. In a twist of fate, Larry Donald's last chance is actually his best chance.