

The Future May Not Be Bleak For Glen Johnson

Written by Matthew Aguilar

Thursday, 16 December 2004 18:00

The future looks bleak for Glencoffe Johnson.

Saturday in Los Angeles, Johnson – the man who left Roy Jones Jr. staring at a Memphis ceiling three months ago – will face Antonio Tarver – the man who left Roy Jones Jr. staring at a Las Vegas ceiling seven months ago. But most boxing people don't expect it to be a competitive fight between two Jones slayers as much as a mismatch of immense proportions.

Tarver is considered too big, too fresh, too powerful and just too good for the gutsy Johnson. Consider that 18 of the 20 experts on The Sweet Science.com team picked Tarver to win.

But the experts have been wrong before. Here's a look at five recent upsets that featured a so-called limited challenger upsetting the more talented champion.

Gerrie Coetzee KO 10 Michael Dokes, Sept. 23, 1983: Dokes, as bloated as he often looked, was considered the heir apparent to recognized champion Larry Holmes. A gifted fighter with blazing hand and foot speed, Dokes lacked power – but made up for it with quickness. He had won the WBA heavyweight title nine months prior, stopping Mike Weaver on a controversial TKO. He drew with Weaver in the rematch, but was still expected to overwhelm South Africa's Coetzee. Known as the "Bionic Man", Coetzee had his right fist surgically repaired to create perhaps the hardest wallop in the heavyweight division. But he was slow and immobile, and Dokes was expected to box circles around him. Surprise! Coetzee breaks out with a jab, of all things, and dominates the lifeless Dokes with boxing skills. Of course, Dokes' well-documented drug problems may have contributed to his demise. But Coetzee was a different fighter on this night, fighting through a cut and finally taking Dokes out with a vicious barrage. It would be the best night of Coetzee's career. He lost the title to Greg Page 13 months later. Dokes made a gutsy last stand in 1989, giving Evander Holyfield hell before falling in the 10th. He was never the same after that.

Iran Barkley KO 3 Thomas Hearns, June 3, 1988: Hearns was fading by this point, having to struggle before knocking out Juan Domingo Roldan for the vacant WBC middleweight title in October 1987. But he was still a formidable force, considered more-than-capable of destroying most middleweights placed before him. Only the superstars of the day were thought capable of defeating him. Barkley was not considered the very best. He was rough and tough and he was sure fun to watch. But he was also easy to hit and cut-prone and susceptible to knockouts and knockdowns. Still, he earned the shot with a surprise knockout of favored Michael Olajide in March 1988. For 2 ½ rounds, the fight went as expected. Hearns punched, and Barkley reeled. "The Hitman" ripped up Barkley's face, and had him wobbly on more than one occasion. But "The Blade" survived the onslaught, and in the third round, his courage was rewarded. He caught Hearns with a big right hand that stunned him, and another that flattened him. Hearns staggered up before falling through the ropes, and ref Richard Steele correctly stopped the fight and made Barkley an unlikely champion. Hearns continued his remarkable career with a draw (it should've been a win) with Leonard in '89 and an upset of Virgil Hill in 1991. Meanwhile, Barkley

The Future May Not Be Bleak For Glen Johnson

Written by Matthew Aguilar

Thursday, 16 December 2004 18:00

made his first defense against Roberto Duran.

Roberto Duran W 12 Iran Barkley, Feb. 24, 1989: The victory over Hearn was a surprise, but Barkley was still considered a big favorite over natural lightweight Duran when they met for Barkley's newly-won WBC middleweight title in Atlantic City. Duran probably didn't deserve the chance, but had reeled off a modest win-streak to qualify. His last great effort had come three years prior, a close points loss to Robbie Sims. He was also 38, and at a serious size disadvantage: Barkley stood 6-foot-1, to Duran's 5-7. It was a physical mismatch, and with Barkley's power, it didn't figure to last long. Shockingly, Duran won it by brawling with Barkley in 89's "Fight of the Year". Barkley showed marked improvement from the Hearn fight, doing almost everything right: Jabbing, throwing in combination, going to the body. But Duran refused to go away. And, in the 11th, "Manos de Piedra" put Barkley on the canvas. It was the difference in a close split decision victory for one of the top five greatest fighters to ever walk the earth. It was also the last great victory of Duran's career. He lost a third fight to Sugar Ray Leonard 10 months later. Barkley resurfaced in 1992 with another upset of Hearn, this time by decision.

Michael Bentt KO 1 Tommy Morrison, Oct. 30, 1993: Michael who? That's what people were thinking when Morrison took on Bentt as a tuneup for an expected 1994 title shot. Bentt came in with modest credentials, while Morrison was coming off the biggest win of his career, a decision over George Foreman in June 1993. Seconds into round one, Morrison's Oklahoma City homecoming turned nightmarish as Bentt put the top contender down. Morrison got up, but it wasn't long before he was down again, and in serious trouble. Bentt finally put Morrison out of his misery, and that title shot disappeared. The fight exposed Morrison's primary weakness: A shaky chin. He would get one more chance at a big name, but was outclassed by Lennox Lewis in 1995. Bentt was never a factor, and stopped by Herbie Hide in '94.

Oliver McCall KO 2 Lennox Lewis, Sept. 24, 1994: A year before doing away with Morrison, Lewis fell victim to an underdog himself. The undefeated Englishman wore the WBC heavyweight title, and though he struggled with the likes of Frank Bruno and Tony Tucker, he was thought to be the best heavyweight in the world. He took on the unheralded McCall in his native London, probably thinking the Chicago-based "Atomic Bull" would serve as a good warmup to fellow champion Michael Moorer. Those plans were changed with one punch, an overhand right, that clipped Lewis right on the chin in the second round. Lewis crashed to the deck. He got up, but the fight was stopped with a buckle of the knees. It would have been the "Upset of the Year" if not for two months later, when George Foreman shocked Moorer with one punch in the 10th round. McCall lost the title to Bruno in 1995. Lewis beat McCall in a rematch in 1997 and went on to become one of the greatest heavyweights of all time (but not before falling to another underdog, Hasim Rahman, in 2001).