

Nine Boxing Predictions for 2005

Written by Rick Folstad

Wednesday, 29 December 2004 18:00

Nine predictions for the fight game in the year 2005. Remember, you heard them here first:

1. Barring any major facial lacerations, the Jan. 29 title fight between Arturo Gatti and Jesse James Leija for Gatti's WBC junior-welterweight title will grab early honors for "fight of the year". Since teaming up with trainer Buddy McGirt, Gatti no longer leads with his face. His rounds-to-cut ratio has plummeted. The fight will make boxing history when Leija, bleeding late in the fight, is allowed to have a blood transfusion between rounds.
2. After two more junior-welterweight title defenses, Kostya Tszyu, tired of all the misspellings, will legally change his name to Ben Smith and move to Fallon, Nevada, where he'll open a dude ranch. In honor of both the famous gunfight and people with dyslexia, he names his new place, the "KO Corral."
3. James "Lights Out" Toney, tired of waiting for a big fight, balloons up to a nifty 298 pounds of solid muscle before Memorial Day. Shortly after his drastic weight gain, Toney is informed that his dream to face a world champion has been answered when a fight is arranged with WBC heavyweight champ Vitali Klitschko in October. Thrilled with the prospect of another title fight, Toney immediately throws his fists into the air, screams a profanity, and severely pulls every muscle in his entire body. He will spend the last seven months of 2005 on his back and in traction, hoping to begin training again sometime in early 2006.
4. Former IBF cruiserweight champ Vassily Jirov, coming off his recent loss to Michael Moorer, in which he took an early lead before being stopped, decides to join the political arena. Running for office in Arizona, Jirov takes a comfortable lead early in the race for a state senate seat, but a last-minute heavy turnout in favor of the incumbent costs Jirov the win.
5. Following knockout losses in February, June and November, former heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield holds a press conference just before Christmas to announce that he'll be fighting under new management for the next three years. "My goal is to unify the heavyweight championship of the world again," he says to the gathered newsmen. "With the right people behind me - people who still believe in me - I know I can do it." Later that afternoon, Holyfield is spotted trying to park his new yellow Cadillac inside the glassed-in showroom of a Toyota dealership outside Macon, Georgia.
6. WBA heavyweight champ John Ruiz will suddenly quit the fight game after being offered a lucrative contract to teach ballroom dancing to elderly ladies aboard the cruise ship Queen Mary.
7. Despite the rumors, Joe Frazier will not be making a comeback this year.
8. With no one willing to fight him, Winky Wright will go undefeated in 2005.

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9. In a bizarre twist of events, Leonard Nimoy's TV series "In Search Of" returns to the air for a brief run in the fall, and in consecutive episodes Nimoy locates James Toney's missing neck, Hector Camacho Jr.'s missing heart, Roy Jones Jr.'s missing chin and Chris Byrd's missing right hand.