

Bernard Hopkins Talks Like He Fights

Written by Rick Folstad

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The thing about Bernard Hopkins is that he talks just like he fights, which means he's non-stop, always busy, always throwing something out there for you to chew on or figure out or to analyze, almost like he's on a natural high that won't let him stop to take a breath or catch a second wind or find the right words, which are just there below the surface if he can find them and tell you why he's such a great fighter and how he respects the profession and expects other fighters like Oscar De La Hoya to respect it too, though Bernard wouldn't come into a fight with his "belly hanging out" over his trunks like Oscar did against Felix Sturm this past June, because you owe something to yourself and to the sport and Bernard takes "pride" in his work and how can you "not get motivated when the guy you're fighting is going to come into the ring and punch your face," so how could you not get yourself at 100 percent to fight a guy?

As for retiring from the fight game, Bernard has "never really sat back" and said to himself, "I'm going to fight three or four times and then quit," because he hasn't seen any signs that make him think he should quit, although if he were Arturo Gatti, well, then he might consider retiring, but it still has never been a thought in his head, though you could get a "detached retina" in a fight and then you should think about retiring, but he's not worried about it because he's got a "better right hand than De La Hoya and a better left hook," than De la Hoya, and he believes he's the "best puncher" of anyone De la Hoya has ever faced.

Besides, if you're "running, you should never look back," because you might get caught and that's why Bernard never looks back, his being "blessed" every time he comes out of a fight healthy, but he knows "nothing lasts forever," and like Mike Tyson said, "Everyone has a plan until they get hit," which is one of those clever little sayings that Bernard will never forget, though Tyson said it when he was still a young fighter "knocking everyone out," at the time.

Bernard thrives on clean living and "has never taken any substance" to enhance his performance as a fighter and he takes pride in that, along with always being in shape, because that's what a fighter should do if he's going to take the fight game seriously, which is why Bernard runs a "tight, military-type camp," and why he sent two sparring partners away from camp early because they forgot they were there "on a mission," and he didn't have time to "baby-sit" while he was training for his Sept. 18 fight against De La Hoya at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas for the undisputed middleweight championship of the world, which is going to be the biggest fight of Bernard's life and that's why he's going to "set a fierce pace that will shock De La Hoya" and he'll "keep it at that pace as long as the fight lasts," and if De La Hoya is not at 100 percent, well, it'll be like "committing suicide."

But the bottom line is, Bernard takes pride in being a "blue-collar, throw-back fighter," like Marvin Hagler, who always carried his own gym bag and that's why Bernard also carries his own gym bag, and he doesn't stay up late "drinking," or "rolling dice in a casino," though he doesn't have anything against someone else's lifestyle if that's what they like to do, but he's looking at bigger and better things and, along with De La Hoya, who Bernard says, "is no chump," and a guy who will "fight to the end and won't quit," they have an opportunity to put on

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a great fight and a chance to "take boxing out of the ICU," where it's been for awhile, though the only two who can make it a great fight are Bernard and Oscar, and if Oscar is up to it, it will be a great fight, because Bernard is sure up to it.

Next question, please.