

## Johnson Confirms Roy Jones' Suspect Chin

Written by Frank Lotierzo

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Last night in attempt to win a piece of the light heavyweight title for the third time, Roy Jones was knocked out by Glencoffe Johnson 41-9-2 (28) in the ninth round with one straight right hand. Johnson, who is not a puncher, was 8-9-2 in his last 19 fights since 1997 and was making the first defense of his IBF light heavyweight title. In his last fight prior to fighting Johnson, Jones lost his title to Antonio Tarver. Tarver knocked Jones out in the second round with one explosive left hook. The left hook Tarver knocked Jones out with was the only clean punch he landed in the fight.

In his last two fights, Roy Jones has been counted out. Both times it was the result of being hit with one clean punch thrown by fighters who weren't known as punchers. Since turning pro in May of 1989, and breezing through his first 51 fights, Jones has been stopped twice. Has father-time finally caught up with Jones, or does he have a soft chin? Those are the only two factors that can clarify why Jones hasn't been able to finish his last two fights. That is unless you regard Tarver's left hook in the same vein as Bob Foster's, and Johnson's right hand the "Spinks Jinx." Which is a conversation I'll never take part in.

In my opinion, father-time has slowed Jones slightly, and he can no longer out-speed his fundamental flaws. Like former heavyweight champ Muhammad Ali, Jones defied a lot of boxing basics and never learned fundamental defense. The fact is neither Ali or Jones ever learned how to block, slip, or parry a punch. They used their legs to keep from getting hit with big shots and moved away. This was wrong and most fighters wouldn't last long if they relied on the same tactic. What saved Ali and Jones was they were so fast in their prime, they could move away from the incoming punches faster than their opponent could deliver them.

Once Ali lost some of his speed as he aged, he was hit more frequently by his opponent's big shots. The same thing has now happened to Roy Jones. He no longer can escape his opponents' punches by just out speeding them and using his legs to take him out of harms way. Now, like Ali at the end of his career, because he can no longer count on his speed for defense, he is getting hit more. The only difference between Muhammad Ali and Roy Jones is Ali has a cast iron chin, and Jones has a suspect one at best.

Those who want to believe Roy Jones was Sugar Ray Robinson incarnate, will point to his age as the reason why he's been counted out in his last two fights as the result of one punch. That's not a reach, and does factor in to the equation regarding Jones being stopped in consecutive fights. But the reason Jones was able to win a piece of the title in four different weight divisions is because his brilliant speed made him almost unhittable, and he never needed his suspect chin as the last line of defense.

All you have to do to realize this is—honestly ask yourself how many times was Jones nailed with a really big shot in his career before the second Tarver fight? The answer is he wasn't. Boxing fans and writers have been asking about Jones' chin his entire career. You couldn't say he had a weak chin because we never saw him really cracked on hit. So that would just be

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speculating. On the other hand, you couldn't say he had an outstanding or great chin because he never had to prove it.

Look, a chin is just like speed and punching power. A fighter is either blessed with it or he's not. The chin of a fighter doesn't erode overnight. Fighters with a good chin can be softened up by an accumulation of many punches over the course of many fights. An example would be Razor Ruddock. Ruddock had an outstanding chin in his two fights with Mike Tyson. However, after 19 tough rounds with Tyson, Ruddock was never as durable. Felix Trinidad did the same thing to Fernando Vargas. As a result of the bombs Vargas took during the fight with Trinidad, he left the ring a different fighter and much more prone to being knocked out.

The problem for Roy Jones is there isn't a Tyson or Trinidad fight in his career, not one. Jones' beard was never hit and tested at all over his first 51 fights, so it wasn't softened up a bit. And don't say it's because of his legs failing him. That is part of the reason as to why he's easier to hit, but his legs aren't the reason why he's been starched by one punch twice.

This may be a bit harsh, but other than politics, boxing is as harsh as it gets. The truth is Roy Jones was never hit once with any significant punches from 1989 through 2003, which is nothing short of being remarkable. Again, if you think that is too tough on him, just remember how many times you came away from 51 of his fights thinking how you never really saw him nailed with a punch that is worth remembering. It was a bunch of near hits and just misses, but nothing making any real contact. And give Jones credit for being that good, he just simply didn't allow his opponents to catch him with anything big. Not to mention that Jones never fought any outstanding punchers during his career.

I believe that Roy Jones has a weak chin, and that it was there his entire career. It's just that as long as he retained his speed, it was never a problem. But once he lost just a morsel of his reflexes and speed, his chin became reachable. Remember, Jones wasn't hit with anything close to the punches that Tarver and Johnson hit him with in his last two fights. We're talking about being counted out twice as a result of one big punch.

In this writer's opinion, a fighter must have a great chin if he is to be compared favorably to the greatest of the greats. This is even more true in the heavyweight division. The chin needs to be the last line of defense because when great fighters fight other great fighters, nobody escapes being nailed, nobody. Had Roy Jones confronted some of boxing history's greatest middleweight and light heavyweight champions, I know one thing, even at his brilliant best he would've been nailed, and more than once. How would he have held up?

No one can say for sure. The only thing I can say with absolute certainty is, I only saw Roy Jones get hit twice with a meaningful punch in his career, and both times that happened he was counted out. There's a reason why Jones never wanted a rubber match with Antonio Tarver, and it wasn't money. He was glove shy from the onset fighting a guy who couldn't punch. How would we he fight a guy that already knocked him out.

And to think at one time there was a boxing analyst who inferred that Jones would've probably defeated Joe Louis and Rocky Marciano. Eventually that analyst left his network because he

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wanted more money. I said it then, and I'll say it again, they should've fired him on the spot for saying something so utterly stupid. Can any true boxing aficionado envision Louis or Marciano being defeated by a fighter with no chin?