

Cory Spinks and Zab Judah – Again

Written by Matthew Aguilar

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Cory Spinks and Zab Judah - two fighters who can't seem to find that ticket to stardom - have found that the road to nowhere goes through each other.

Though Spinks is the undisputed welterweight champ, he is so desperate for a name opponent that he is taking on Judah, whom he handily defeated in April. His previous fight was a boring decision over the ancient Miguel Angel Gonzalez in September, and the underwhelming year effectively knocked the "Next Generation" out of all pound-for-pound talk.

It also eliminated him as an attractive opponent for the sport's big names - specifically Floyd Mayweather and Kostya Tszyu. So here he is, fighting Judah again in a rematch that no one wants to see. And praying that his performance is good enough that some promoter deems him worthy of a shot at the big boys.

Don't bet on it happening.

Cory Spinks isn't a very exciting fighter. He is a safety-first southpaw whose fine boxing skills dictate that toe-to-toe exchanges will always be reduced to a minimum. His fight with Judah last year was decent, though the only drama was produced when a "Super" counter left put him on the deck in the final round.

He failed to produce an emphatic victory despite the fact that he was bigger, taller and stronger than his opponent. And the knockdown seemed to indicate a vulnerability - especially in the 147-pound king's chin.

Then came the Gonzalez fight.

There have been some bad fights over the years. Evander Holyfield-Vaughn Bean in 1998 and Fred Norwood-Juan Manuel Marquez in '99 come to mind. But Spinks-Gonzalez was a stinker from the moment "The Next Generation" agreed to fight the faded former 135-pound champion. Not only was Gonzalez years past his prime, but he was significantly smaller than Spinks.

And, still, Spinks struggled - winning a lackluster decision for the second time in five months. He should be thankful that he dropped just a few notches in the pound-for-pound rankings.

His stock as a marketable fighter, however, dropped significantly more.

Judah, meanwhile, is perhaps this generation's Mark Breland or Donald Curry.

Back in 1999, Judah was thought to be a Pernell Whitaker with a punch. And while those comparisons were unfair - Whitaker is one of the greatest fighters in history - Judah was nevertheless expected to be enjoying a brilliant career by now.

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But all of his promise may have been destroyed with one punch in 2001.

That's when Tszyu sent an overconfident Judah sprawling onto his back, courtesy of a big right hand. Judah got up, but his overanxiousness cost him. He rose immediately, and when his legs did an involuntary Charleston, referee Jay Nady stopped the fight in round two.

Judah responded by throwing a tantrum - choking Nady and tossing a stool across the ring. It didn't do anything to change the result. It did, however, make him look like a baby.

Since then, Judah has been hot-and-cold, but that maturity factor is still a concern. He looked decent enough against the bigger Spinks. But his struggle against Rafael Pineda - who was so used up that he made Gonzalez look like a prospect - was horrid.

Judah, obviously unprepared, almost lost an opportunity with his carelessness.

So now Spinks - the guy who can't look good against smaller, older fighters - will fight Judah - the classic underachiever.

Again.

The boxing world can hardly wait.