

David Tua Calls Talmadge Over

Written by Joey Knish

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Red Rover, Red Rover, David Tua has called Talmadge Griffis over . . . to New Zealand that is.

The object of Red Rover that we all played as young ones on the schoolyard was to join hands and prevent the kid on the other side from running through your guard. To build your team the strategy was to call out the weakest person on the other side who was least likely to run through your guard. When matchmaking for a fighter making a comeback the plan is much the same. For Team Tua the weak link in the heavyweight division is Talmadge Griffis, and as a result he has been called over to challenge Tua in his comeback.

It's official, or at least it is as official as things get in boxing, that David Tua and his decapitating left hook are back. The Terminator, The Throwin' Samoan, The Tuaman - wait, what exactly is a Tuaman anyway . . . other than the second worse nickname for a boxer behind 'Goofi' - anyways, all indications are that he will be back in the ring to dispose of Griffis in Auckland this March.

At 32 years of age and sporting a professional record of 42-3-1 with 37 knockouts - mostly of the stunning, snot-rocking variety that puts seats in the seats - the colorful David Tua is set to put a dent in the heavyweight scene once more. We can hope at least.

The last time we saw the native of Western Samoa he danced to a slow drum with Hasim Rahman for twelve uneventful rounds. Most observers felt Rahman got the better of the limited exchanges, but Tua escaped with a draw in what was a rematch of Tua's controversial stoppage of Rahman back in 1998.

The road back has to start somewhere and so the first step will be in David Tua's backyard yard of his adopted home of New Zealand. After a layoff caused by managerial disputes and a lack of desire, the 5' 9" heavyweight will come back against made-to-order Talmadge Griffis. One has to walk before he runs and Tua will use the spring bout to get his ring legs back and shake out the rust that semi-retirement and shuffleboard can cause.

While we will hope that he tips the scales under 240 pounds, that may be asking a bit much of a fighter who has been off so long. Nine of his past ten fights have been at over 240 and that just doesn't seem to suit a small heavyweight very well. Yes, he has tree trunk legs, but his high weights seem to indicate he is built to fight a few rounds and run out of gas as fights wear on. His recent fights suggest that his punch output suffers dramatically the deeper fights go.

Running out of gas shouldn't be a problem for Tua when he takes on Talmadge. Griffis has been put on ice by both Joe Mesi and Cedric Boswell, and those qualifications have him receiving airfare for a trip to Auckland. In his past five bouts Griffis has lost four times with his lone win over the now 5-11 Harold Rodriguez. While Talmadge Griffis isn't a household name outside of the Griffis household, he does bring a record on paper that at least looks respectable.

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At 22-5-3, 'Two Guns' Griffis appears to be a decent litmus test as to how much work Tua will need, especially if he extends the Samoan past six or seven heats. His only win over an opponent that might ring a bell was against decent Dale Crowe, but it took him two fights to do it, as the two fought to a draw when they met for the first time. Other than that, Griffis has stepped up and been knocked back down.

But this show at Waitakere's Trusts Stadium in New Zealand is all about David Tua, and the stage looks set for a grand entrance back on to the heavyweight scene.

The state of boxing's flagship division is in such a state of flux that many of the top-ten fighters can hold legitimate dreams of being world champion. Those dreams still burn for Tua and the game of being a top-ten ranked fighter continues in March.

Talmadge Griffis, you have been called over.