

Cruiser Countdown – O’Neil Bell vs. Kelvin Davis II

Written by Joey Knish

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When two guys with the nicknames of “Give ‘em Hell” and “Concrete” get together you can expect some fireworks. And in case you missed the controversial thriller between two of the top cruiserweights in the world, the good news is you have another chance.

February 5th on the undercard of the Cory Spinks vs. Zab Judah rematch in St. Louis, Missouri, cruiserweights O’Neil “Give ‘em Hell” Bell and Kelvin “Concrete” Davis will serve up a tasty appetizer to the welterweight main course.

The Showtime broadcast will feature a rematch between Bell and Davis, who met in March 2003, when Bell escaped with a TKO11 victory. In the 11th round of that fight Bell rocked Davis with a five-shot flurry that dropped Davis to the canvas where Bell hit him again. When Davis rose he was met by more than a half-dozen unanswered shots. That led referee Bill Marshall to stop the bout. Davis did not appear to be in serious danger, but he didn’t answer back with anything to counter the oncoming Bell.

Prior to that ending, the two had engaged in a spirited battle, which featured knockdowns, cuts and point deductions.

Georgia’s O’Neil Bell, 23-1-1 with 22 knockouts, was rocked in the second round of the first fight and suffered a wicked cut over his right eyebrow, courtesy of an accidental clash of heads, which his corner did an excellent job of controlling throughout the bout. Just as the second round ended he was caught by a chin-rattling uppercut and shot to the body. An early night looked to be in store as Bell went down, only to have the knockdown be ruled a slip by Marshall. Davis didn’t let up and jumped on Bell and righted that wrong by dropping him with a solid right hand flush on the jaw as the seconds ticked away. Saved by the bell, O’Neil got his breath of life.

By the sixth round Bell had turned the bout in his favor, with Mississippi native Kelvin Davis, 21-2-1 and 16 knockout victories, absorbing some heavy shots and with not much left in the tank with which to answer back. The tide had completely turned on Davis as Bell landed flush hooks and straight rights that led to the knockdown in the eleventh round. With Davis clearly on a knee, Bell couldn’t contain himself in the heat of the battle and nailed Davis with a right behind the ear that sent him flat on the canvas. Davis beat the count but succumbed to the constant volley of blows from Bell and the bout was stopped.

With a touch of controversy - both fighters knocked down, an accidental clash of heads and two heavy-handed big men - O’Neil Bell vs. Kelvin Davis Part I offered a little bit of everything . . . but it also left some unfinished business. The IBF ordered a rematch, which Bell and his management refused. That action cleared the way for Davis to claim the IBF cruiserweight title with a TKO 8 victory over Ezra Sellers. On February 5th Bell and Davis will finally get it on again, this time for the IBF belt now belonging to Davis.

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After the loss to Bell, Davis took a solid decision win over 18-3-2 Louis Azille. Then he captured the IBF 190-pound title by pounding out the TKO win over Sellers. Bell has also won twice, a TKO 8 win over 24-5-0 Derrick Harmon and his own two round blowout of Ezra Sellers. Unfortunately Sellers doesn't provide much of a measuring stick, as both men stopped him, Bell doing so six rounds before Davis. Common opponents don't usually provide much help in terms of pointing us to a winner. While the first fight helps somewhat, the ebb-and-flow of that bout could have shifted back to Davis prior to the final bell and both men had their moments.

Fortunately for fight fans, these two will settle it the old-fashioned way: by lacing up the gloves and trading bombs in between periods of tactical boxing. It's a rematch that is really a continuation of a very good first fight.

Also at stake will be some good paydays as the best of the cruiserweight division start their collision course. Big things should lie ahead for the winner of the Bell-Davis rematch, as two of the other top cruiserweights in the world, WBC champ Wayne Braithwaite and WBA king Jean Marc Mormeck, are set to meet in April. The winners of these respective bouts could set up a unification bout with the WBA, WBC and IBF belts. Only Johnny Nelson and his WBO title would be left unaccounted for.

This year marks the countdown to the Brawl For It All in the 190-pound division and after a few slow years in the cruiserweight division, things are set to return to the excitement they once enjoyed. Forget what you think you remember about the cruiserweights. It's time to focus on what we know. And we know O'Neil Bell, Kelvin Davis, Wayne Braithwaite, Jean Marc Mormeck and Johnny Nelson will be taking the division off Cruise Control and hitting the accelerator in 2005.

First up is Bell-Davis II.

Gentlemen start your engines.