

## Heavyweight Boxing: Who the Heck is Owen Beck?

Written by Joey Knish  
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Owen "What the Heck" Beck is a fighter many fans are going to see for the first time when he enters the ring Saturday, February 5th, to face Monte "Two Gunz" Barrett. The bout, a meaningful heavyweight battle, is the chief support to the Cory Spinks versus Zab Judah sequel and will open the Showtime broadcast.

Many fans are familiar with Barrett from his gutsy performance against Joe Mesi at the Garden and his most recent fight - a win over the heavily hyped Dominick Guinn. But exactly who the heck is Owen "What the Heck" Beck?

A native of Jamaica who now resides in Nashville, Tennessee, Owen Beck is managed by Carl King and thus falls under the vast umbrella of Don King heavyweight fighters. That shelter can protect fighters from a few rainy days, but it can also get a fighter exposed under the bright lights when the moment of truth comes out. With a solid amateur boxing record of 73-5, the 28-year old is set to step out and be shown for what he. What that exactly is will be determined Saturday evening with Monte Barrett providing the exam.

Beck will bring a perfect 24-0-0 record into the ring and has ended 18 of those 24 fights prematurely. Unfortunately, perusing his six-year professional record doesn't tell us a very interesting story. Aside from a six-round victory over the limited Taurus Sykes, Beck has been beating on a series of fighters that, that, well, unbeaten records are made from. Recent wins over the likes of Troy Weida, Vernon Woodward, Byron Polley, Daniel Frank and Scott Conner spot his 2004 resume are supposedly a step up in competition - which only provides further commentary on who he had faced in previous years - and are not the kind of opposition that gets a fighter ready for the Monte Barretts of the boxing world.

A few conclusions we can draw from a look at Owen Beck is that he has decent power, expressed by the 18 knockouts in 24 victories, and that he may be a bit "chinny" himself. In two of his past four fights, the Negril-born heavyweight has been knocked down twice, by the aforementioned Polley and Frank. While Frank (15-9-1) may have some pop - each of his 15 victories has come via the short route - Polley is certainly no heavy hitter. The mere fact that he has been dropped by a fighter with just 6 whacks in 15 wins (Polley) sends "caution" signs running through one's mind.

So why fight a solid veteran on a roll like Monte Barrett?

The answer most likely lays somewhere between the King umbrella being unable to protect him much longer and his management's own desire to see exactly what type of fighter they have on their hands. Another possibility is that they may truly believe that they have a contender for a heavyweight championship on their hands. If they do, a victory over Barrett will go a long way to starting that journey.

Monte Barrett, 30-3-0 (16 KOs) is a very tough fighter to look good against. He has near ideal

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heavyweight dimensions at 6' 3" and normally weighs in at 220 pounds. Barrett boxes very well and earned the name "Two Gunz" for his ability to fight equally well from both the orthodox and southpaw stances. Over the course of a fight he will often give his opponent both looks and continually keep them off guard. While he has lost three times - to Lance Whitaker, Wladimir Klitschko and Joe Mesi - only the Klitschko fight was one-sided. Whitaker took a split decision nod back in 1999 and in 2003 Barrett and Mesi traded knockdowns as Mesi escaped with a majority decision by a combined total of three points.

At 33 years of age this is also a big bout for the Queens fighter, and Barrett must know that, as he likely won't have a better profile than the one is on right now. The loss to Mesi was a fight that came out with a positive ending because he looked good on HBO, and many feel he lost to the house and not to the fighter. Ranked #3 in the WBC, #4 by the WBO, #6 WBA and #7 in the IBF, Barrett is poised to land a title shot and championship payday soon - if he doesn't slip up on Saturday.

For Owen Beck, the chance to knock off a top contender as widely respected as Barrett could push him to the forefront of the heavyweight contender waiting list if the bout concludes successfully. The fight, an eliminator in the eyes of both the WBC and IBF, may shape the future of the next big heavyweight title fight for either WBA champion John Ruiz or IBF king Chris Byrd.

The Savvis Center in St. Louis will host this intriguing heavyweight eliminator bout on Saturday and Showtime will bring us the broadcast. Many questions will be answered by this bout, the least of which is, who the heck is Owen "What the Heck" Beck?