

Boxing Conference Call: McCline Meets Brock at Caesar's Vegas

Written by Rick Folstad
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It's too bad one of these guys has to lose. They both sound like someone you'd want to invite to a ball game if you had an extra ticket and room left in your car. Polite, respectful, articulate and very large, they'd also be handy to have around if the home crowd got a little ugly because you kept yelling for the wrong team.

Heavyweights Jameel McCline (31-4-3, 19 KOs) and Calvin Brock (24-0, 20 KOs) are scheduled to meet April 23 at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas.

It's a big fight for both fighters but for different reasons. For McCline, it's a chance to stay near the front of the barking pack for another few months, a chance to stay in the heavyweight hunt for a big money fight, which is why he's in this game.

McCline refers to himself as the "old lion" at this point in his career, and he's still looking for that elusive multi-million-dollar purse that's always just outside his reach.

After all, he says he only made \$100,000 for the Chris Byrd fight this past November. That's chump change in the heavyweight division, pocket money when you're talking about fighting for a belt. And he almost beat Byrd, the IBF heavyweight title slipping through his fingers like water when he started gasping a little in the final rounds.

"I weighed 270 for the Byrd fight and that was way too much," McCline said on a conference call this week promoting his ESPN pay-per-view fight with Brock. "I carried too much muscle into the fight and in the latter rounds I couldn't get my punches off."

Byrd, who won a split decision, was lucky he couldn't.

"My goal is to come in at 260 for this fight," McCline said. "I'll have to take care of business."

For Brock, a win over McCline means bright lights, more TV and bigger paydays. But more important, a win announces his arrival, the new kid on the block suddenly beating up one of the gang.

"I look at myself as being the heavyweight champion of the world," Brock said. "Jameel is the toughest opponent I've been in the ring with, but if I beat Jameel, I'm definitely in line for a title shot."

The best story behind this fight is that the two fighters sparred for a week last fall when McCline was getting ready for the Byrd fight. And as a favor to McCline, Brock sparred as a southpaw because Byrd is a southpaw. Brock fought left-handed in his amateur days but has been a right-hander his entire pro career.

"It was a good experience helping him get ready to fight Byrd," Brock said. "But this is going to

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be a different style and a different fight from when I sparred with him (because I'll be right-handed). I went into camp to help Jameel. Now, he just happens to be my next opponent."

"In camp, Brock was probably our top guy," McCline said about those sparring sessions. "And I want to thank him for turning around for me. I appreciate it. We didn't look at him then as just a sparring partner. I know I'm going to see something different in this fight."

Brock says one of his strengths is his ability to adjust to any style he faces. You pick that ability up when you've had more than 180 amateur fights.

"And I came from 139 pounds all the way up to heavyweight," he said. "I have a lot of experience."

McCline didn't have quite that many amateur fights.

"I had one fight as an amateur," he said. "But I did win it."

Got a couple extra tickets to the ball game?