

Jeff Lacy vs. Robin Reid – A Bump on Lacy's Road to Greatness

Written by JE Grant

Saturday, 23 April 2005 21:00

Jeff Lacy, 19-0 (1 NC) (15 KOs), has the potential to rise to stardom in the boxing world. Already a titleholder, he appears to have the skills, the motivation and, more importantly, the willingness to put it on the line against the best in the business. While the nickname "Left Hook" is somewhat confusing, given that it does not appear to be his best weapon, he is certainly dangerous with both hands.

The announcement that he will take on the current number one (IBF) ranked Robin Reid is at once a disappointment and fully expected. He must take on Reid, 38-4-1 (27 KOs) at this point in his career. It is probably a good calculation on his part to engage in a mandatory defense. Their bout, now set for August 6th, is yet another fight featuring a champion and someone who is rated number one, but who isn't really the top fighter in the division.

Of course a fight with Joe Calzaghe or Mikkel Kessler would prove more satisfying. Fights with stars like Bernard Hopkins, Glen Johnson, Antonio Tarver or Roy Jones would prove more entertaining. But none of the sanctioning bodies can pretend to represent the best if they ignore the existence of other sanctioning bodies' champions.

Hopefully Lacy doesn't become so beholden to a sanctioning body that he forgets his dreams. He's already said he would fight Hopkins for pocket change. He knows that to be the best he must beat the best.

Lacy also hopefully understands that Robin Reid does not represent the best in the business. Reid, already a title challenger (and loser) to then-WBA/IBF champ Sven Ottke, and longtime WBO belt-holder Calzaghe, is indeed a former champion from many years back. However, his best is likely well behind him, despite him having won several recent fights.

Reid's biggest victory in the years since his short WBC super middleweight tenure has to be over Brian Magee. Magee, a fighter who has fought only in Ireland and England, has proven as reluctant to take on the major players as Calzaghe. The fans of boxing in the British Isles are as loyal as any on the face of the earth, but even they grow tired of seeing their local fighters protected against legitimate opposition.

And forget about Reid's IBO and WBF "titles." They weren't world championship caliber bouts by any stretch of the imagination.

Nor can we say that Lacy has beaten a slew of world beaters. Although his wins over Omar Sheika and Syd Vanderpool represent solid efforts, neither was anywhere near the class of Jones or Hopkins. What makes Lacy's case different is that he understands that and wants to face the super champs. He is not hiding (at least so far) behind the rules of a sanctioning body and has actively sought big bouts. He is also just 19 fights into his pro career. If he stretches that streak to 30 without facing a real contender, then we'll criticize him just as surely as we criticize Calzaghe and crew.

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Lacy has learned from his fights with Sheika and Ruben Williams that he must continue to improve.

Lacy can quickly remove himself from the self-imposed obscurity that is besetting Calzaghe. Calzaghe always seems to have a reason not to fight the top fighters in his or any other weight class. He just couldn't seem to make a deal with Ottke; can't ever come to terms with Hopkins; and never quite got in there with Roy Jones. He's 38-0, a long-term titleholder, and we still don't know if he can fight. Perhaps he'll leave the British Isles long enough to prove he can really make a go of it.

Perhaps Lacy will continue to be motivated by his 2000 Olympic experience where he lost in the quarterfinals and went home without a medal. Having not won a medal has apparently pushed him to excel above expectations as a pro. He fights as if he has something to prove each time out.

"Not winning an Olympic medal was a blessing," said Lacy in a Showtime website profile. (Showtime will air his bout with Reid.) Since that time he has been on a mission to confirm his status as a fighter to be reckoned with.

When all is said and done, Lacy may wear multiple straps at super middleweight and may have a much longer reign as a light heavyweight. Robin Reid should prove a mere bump in the road. None of us can say for sure where Lacy will end up, but he clearly wants to climb to the top of the mountain, something which is refreshing for the super middleweight division.