

Johnson-Tarver Fight Predictions

Written by Robert Ecksel
Thursday, 16 June 2005 19:00

"Gentleman" Glen Johnson, formerly known as "The Road Warrior," meets Antonio "Magic Man" Tarver a second time this Saturday in Memphis, Tennessee, in a fight broadcast on HBO. Johnson won their first fight by decision, but most commentators felt it could just as easily have gone the other way. The Magic Man has a history of doing better in rematches than he did the first time around. Can he pull it off this time against Glen Johnson? This is how The Sweet Science writers call it.

Even though Tarver is a quick study when it comes to rematches, I don't see Johnson losing the way Roy Jones and Harding did to Tarver the second time around. Look for Johnson to swarm Tarver, whom I suspect will try to turn the bout into a war instead of laying back and picking his shots like he did in the first match. Tarver is the bigger puncher here but I see Johnson outworking him again in an entertaining bout that goes the distance. Then again, I'm the guy who picked Tszyu to knock Hatton out in one round and Abdulaev to beat Cotto.

Mitch Abramson

Johnson is as hard and tough as they come, and his victory over Tarver last December was the culmination of a feel-good year for the "Road Warrior". But, more than likely, his storybook run ends with the Tarver rematch. The "Magic Man" fought too aggressively last time out, opting to stand and trade with the stronger Johnson instead of using his natural advantages: Speed and height. Tarver may have also entered the ring more than a little overconfident and under-conditioned, thinking Johnson's one-punch KO of Roy Jones Jr. three months prior was a fluke. This time, Tarver comes in focused and prepared, and he'll stay on the outside enough to build a significant, early lead before Johnson rallies down the stretch. The early lead will be too much for Johnson to overcome. Tarver by split decision in another good scrap.

Matt Aguilar

Glen Johnson's a tough, tough cookie. I believe he just out-willed Tarver in their first encounter. Did Tarver underestimate Glencoffe ? I think he did. He will not make the same mistake again. This should be a very tightly contested bout. I see a lot of momentum changes. What I also see is Tarver being a little more aggressive. By doing this it will be less likely that Johnson will set the tempo of the bout like he did in their first meeting. I'll have to go with Tarver by decision.

Jim Amato

I think Tarver took Johnson lightly last time. He wins a unanimous decision in the rematch. Trainer Buddy McGirt will see to that.

Robert Cassidy Jr.

It'll go the distance as both fighters are too skilled to get caught in a knockout. Glen Johnson will earn a unanimous decision.

Jesse K. Cox

I was one of the few who picked Johnson to win the first fight (and by split decision, no less),

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and might be one of the few to pick him to do it again. People will cite Tarver's impressive track record in rematches (TKO5 Harding, TKO2 Jones) and figure him to turn the trick here. No way - at least not by one-punch KO. In both fights where he avenged previous losses, Tarver landed a single shot that either ended the fight (Jones) or permanently changed the course of the fight (Harding). Johnson can take your punch, and also applies far more pressure than the aforementioned. Tarver is troubled by such fighters; he's not comfortable when forced to work for three minutes of every round. Glengoffe made him do so in the first fight; Tarver wasn't willing to do it in all twelve rounds, and it cost him the fight - much like the first Roy fight. Glen will make him do it again, because that is what he does best. Tarver's best chance is by one-punch knockout and it's not going to happen. Johnson by decision, leaving Tarver to refer to him as "Daddy" on this Father's Day weekend.

Jake Donovan

Same as last time ... He must be careful not to be out-hustled by Glen Johnson, but Antonio Tarver's superior talent should prevail in the end. Tarver by Decision.

Chris Gielty

Tarver by decision. I have no strong feelings on this winner of this fight, but I'm extremely eager to see how it unfolds. It's a competitive matchup, but I have a hunch Tarver will be more prepared this time.

Tim Graham

Glen Johnson and Antonio Tarver each ditched their respective title belts to fight each other last December. It seems the WBA, WBC and IBF had other names in mind for each of them as their respective "number 1" contenders. Of course the rest of the world recognized then and now that the best two light heavyweights were in the ring in a bout recognized only by The Ring magazine as a title fight (no, I am not going to mention some of the other, lesser-known alphabets that did recognize it as a championship). They are still the best two light heavyweights, but each has something to prove. Johnson gave the solid, workmanlike effort he has become known for - only this time he was on the right side of a close decision. Another win puts him firmly at the top of the division in time for him to capture some substantial paydays in the twilight of his career. Tarver, claiming now that he wasn't at his best, must win lest he become a footnote in the history of the division. Tarver has proven adaptability and focus in beating both Eric Harding and Roy Jones in rematches. I think he'll do it again. Tarver by KO in 10.

JE Grant

Tarver controlled Johnson in spots of the first fight; he just didn't ration his output for a twelve round fight (even though he signed for one). Lesson learned, I think the tall southpaw does enough fighting at a more measured pace to bank rounds and then hold off a late Johnson rally while Tarver is still fresh. Johnson is a classic overachiever and would be a surprise winner here . . . just as he was the first time. Tarver's heavier shots exact his revenge as the "Magic Man" sweeps the scorecards at the end of the night.

Joey Knish

DEJA VU all over again. Johnson by decision.

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George Kimball

We haven't heard much from Tarver in the media lately, and I take that to be a good thing. After knocking out Roy Jones, Tarver pulled a Riddick Bowe and forgot what brought him to the dance--toiling away in the gym, not mugging for the camera on Jay Leno. Even at less than 100%, one could argue that Tarver beat the busier Johnson 7-5 or at least deserved a draw. He has never lost a rematch; he comes up big when his back is against the wall. A well-conditioned, focused and hungry Tarver should easily decision "The Road Warrior"--or maybe even stop him late in the fight. He's simply the more gifted fighter...and desperately needs to win this fight.

Zachary Levin

I hate to go against the Road Warrior because A) he's full of surprises lately and B) he's one of the nicest guys in the sport -- but I have to believe that Tarver is hungrier. Tarver wins by lopsided decision but Johnson shows tremendous heart and never stops coming -- unlike some other people we know.

Marc Lichtenfeld

My head says Tarver, but my heart says Johnson. Johnson W 12.

Bob Mladinich

It's hard to pick a winner in this, because my head tells me Tarver employs his tools with better effect this time and pulls his usual rematch trick. But my heart tells me it will take a better fighter than Tarver to take the title from Johnson given the heartache and time it took him to secure it. I'm going to go with my heart, because my head let me down in the Hatton fight. Johnson on points.

David Payne

When I was at their first fight, I thought Johnson won it convincingly -- his punches had more heft. I remember wincing at the impact of his body shots...and he forced the action. Tarver had his innings but they didn't seem as telling. I thought Johnson won it bigger than the cards -- that was in person. When I saw it on TV at home, I got a different picture: Not only did Tarver land more -- and accurately -- but his shots that looked less weighty live. Johnson grunted and put everything in every swing. Tarver looked more strategic on TV than ruffled. It was a close verdict on TV, and could have gone either way. If Tarver fell short, it was only because he didn't do enough. If he picks it up earlier -- because he can do more things -- he should win a grueling unanimous decision.

Joe Rein

I think Tarver is more talented, but Johnson has some things he worked very hard for -- a title and respect -- and he is tough enough to keep them by decision.

Ed Schuyler

Prior to their first fight, I was skeptical of Tarver's preparation. He appeared to be a full-fledged heavyweight while he was doing pre-fight commentary for Hopkins vs. De La Hoya in September of last year. In his mid-30s, I thought he might be depleted melting down to 175 for

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Johnson in December. Tarver didn't appear to be on point, and Tarver is now confirming that he wasn't as prepared for their first fight as he should've been. Tarver is typically brilliant in rematches, and I expect him to be much more focused and powerful for the rematch. I think he'll try to get Johnson's respect early with some heavy artillery and look for weaknesses to break him down and stop him. It'll be a tough fight, but I like Tarver in a clear unanimous decision or stoppage.

Greg Smith

The first time around, Antonio Tarver had a huge lead over Glen Johnson in landed punches but the judges were impressed by the "Road Warrior's" constant aggression. This second fight will have the feel of most sequels. The action will be all too familiar, but the outcome will not. While it may not be a classic, a trilogy is in the works. Tarver by unanimous decision.

Aaron Tallent

Look for Tarver to keep his record of reversing losses perfect in this rematch. I expect a more focused Magic Man to rely more on his superior hand speed and leverage in countering everything the hard-working Glen Johnson throws at him. Antonio Tarver by unanimous decision.

Scott Yaniga