

## Hopkins, Taylor, and the Rematch Clause

Written by Rick Folstad  
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This is why they invented contracts with clauses. This is why we have second and third chances, why we have rematches.

When it was all over Saturday night, when everything had been added up and handed out and rolled away, there was still this uneasy feeling that something wasn't settled. It was like spilling your cold beer after just a couple sips and realizing it was the last bottle left in the fridge. You're still thirsty but the store is closed, so you're left with this strong yearning for closure.

Jermain Taylor officially won Saturday night. He fought a very good fight against undisputed middleweight champ Bernard Hopkins at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. But the fight still left us with a question. As of Sunday morning, who is the best middleweight in the world?

Sometimes, it's better to end a fight with someone dazed and teetering in a corner or slumped over the ropes, then to turn it over to three guys in suits who are susceptible to human error. Knockouts are pretty because they put a final brush stroke on a fight, wiping away all doubt.

But you go 12 close rounds and everything turns sticky. You leave a fight to the judges and it turns into a crap game, a soap opera and a fairy tale all mixed into one. You don't know what's going to happen, but you always figure it's going to be bad. You wince as they start announcing the scores, afraid you're going to hear numbers that don't make sense.

Hopkins, who came on strong the last half of the fight, put part of the blame for his loss on the scorecard of judge Duane Ford. Unlike most of us who thought Hopkins won the 12th round, Ford gave it to Taylor, which brings up the interesting question, "What the hell were you watching, Duane?"

If Hopkins had won the 12th round on Ford's card like he did on everyone else's, it would have been a draw and Hopkins would still be the undisputed middleweight champ of the world. The title just wouldn't fit quite as well as it did before Saturday night.

And if it had ended in a draw or if Hopkins had won, you can be pretty sure he would have been the first one to shake Taylor's hand in his corner and whisper into his ear that he was looking forward to the rematch.

And that's what Taylor did.

"There's a rematch clause in the contract and I'm sure Bernard will exercise it," Taylor said after the fight. "I will give him a rematch no matter what. Whenever he wants it, I will give it to him."

That's what we like to hear.

Unfortunately, the rematch was tentatively scheduled for Oct. 1, but Taylor, who received

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several stitches in his scalp after an accidental headbutt, won't be ready that soon.

Overall, he didn't look like Saturday night's winner.

I'm not saying Hopkins got robbed, but the challenger usually has to take the title from the champ, and Taylor didn't exactly jerk it out of Hopkins' hands.

But that's why that rematch clause is so nice.

"There will be a rematch," Hopkins said. "And next time I will make sure to knock him out, or at least make sure someone like Duane Ford, who gave him the last round, is not a judge."

Better knock him out.