

## Roy Jones No-Show in New York

Written by Robert Ecksel  
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As the ballyhoo continues for the third fight between Antonio Tarver (23-2, 18 KOs) vs. Roy Jones Jr. (49-3, 38 KOs) for Tarver's light heavyweight crown, Jones, whose disdain of the media is legendary, was a no-show at the press conference at the Copa today in New York.

The HBO brass, the fighters' reps, the media, and assorted hangers-on assembled in the Copa's main room to pump the October 1 fight in Tampa, but Roy Jones either missed his plane or didn't want to break camp. Take your pick. For a fight called "No Excuses," the excuses have already begun.

Despite the fact that this bout was made at Jones' behest, for reasons apparent to us all, Roy's absence put a pall on the proceedings, which were, fortunately, enlivened by the gracious intelligence of Antonio Tarver.

When asked about Roy Jones, Tarver said, "I think he just need to get focused. I mean the guy was doing rap music all in the studio, getting sidetracked with a lotta different other things. And I told him that if he ever face me, we're gonna let the air out of that basketball. He had to go back to the gym – and I don't think he did that. I don't know what he was doin'. But I know what I was doin'. And I know what I'll continue to do: take boxing seriously and love the sport to the point where I'm gonna give it 110%.

"Maybe he was distracted ... but I'm not going to give him a way out or make any excuses for him. That was his fault if he didn't do what he needed to do to protect himself and make sure that he prepare. That's his fault."

Many of us wish this fight wasn't happening, or that Jones took on a soft touch before tangling with Tarver a third time, but this was the fight Roy wanted, so this is the fight Roy gets, and HBO gets product in the process.

"It shocked me," Tarver said about Jones wanting to fight him a third time. "But then again, that's why I feel Roy Jones has been on his P's and Q's. He's been watching me. He's had two fights to really analyze me. I know he's a crafty fighter. I know he's a smart fighter. And I know he understands what faces him October 1."

What, or who, Jones faces October 1 is the man to knocked him out with one punch on May 15, 2004, starting the slide that culminated in Glen Johnson's KO of Jones four months later in Memphis. Even Jones-Tarver I on November 8, 2003 – a disputed majority decision that many, including Tarver, thought might be the end of the line for Jones – suggested that Roy was on the downside of his career, despite the best efforts of the judges to suggest otherwise.

But Roy Jones is nothing if not his own man and has thrown caution to the wind to make this fight.

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“For him to go to HBO and say ‘I want this fight,’ I mean, hey,” said Tarver, “I respect that. That’s why I gotta get my butt in the gym, I gotta get focused, and I gotta work hard, because I know this guy got big plans. I just gotta make sure they don’t come to fruition.

“The guy did in boxing everything that he could. He’s coming back for one last heroic moment for his fans and all the people that believe in him. I commend him for that. This is what champions are all about. Roy Jones is finally showing the championship heart that a lotta people in the business said he never had. He always played it safe. He lived off of fighting less than stellar opponents. But now he wanna fight the biggest, the baddest light heavyweight in the world, because this is how he wants to go out, giving it his all, trying to recapture that moment in time, to allow the people to see him once again as the great Roy Jones Jr. And Antonio Tarver is the only person who can give that to him.”

The inevitable subject of Roy Jones Jr. missing the press conference came up, and Tarver didn’t skip a beat.

“He’s missed a lotta press conferences,” Tarver said. “I don’t know what to make of that. As long as he show up October 1, he don’t have to show up for the press conference.”