

## Excuse No Excuses

Written by Rick Folstad  
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Roy Jones Jr. finally stepped out of the shadows and into the spotlight on Thursday.

For all of 15 gripping seconds.

That's about how long it took a bearded Jones to inform everyone at a press conference at the St. Pete Times Forum in Tampa that, well, he didn't have much to say, that his hand was fine and that he had no excuses.

"I have one reason to be here and that's to kick ass, and that's all I've got to (gosh darn) say," said Jones, referring to Saturday night's rubber match with light-heavyweight king Antonio Tarver at the Forum (HBO pay-per-view).

And that's all he did say. Because then he was gone, he and his band of worshippers quickly strutting out of the conference room, a surprised media crowd left behind, most of us scratching our heads at the newest Roy Jones Jr., snub and pre-fight caper.

Unofficial estimates of his actual time at the microphone ranged from 12 to 17 seconds, depending on when you started timing him. Many writers didn't even get a chance to turn on their tape recorders. It took about 20 seconds to write down everything he had to say. It was almost a full paragraph.

A real comedian, this Jones fella. Of course, not everyone thought it was funny.

"That shows disrespect for the media and the promoter," said Tarver's promoter, Joe DeGuardia of Star Boxing. "Boxing needs people out there hyping the sport. [Jones] has an obligation to Antonio Tarver, HBO, boxing fans, the media and everyone else. There is so much more he could do to contribute to this sport. I think he has an obligation."

Apparently, Jones disagrees.

Reporters from around the country were left standing in small groups during the dead time, waiting for the scheduled arrival of Tarver for his press conference some 90 minutes later.

When Tarver finally came into the room, things lightened up as he was shown a TV clip of Jones' 15-second discourse.

"They're trying everything to get to me," Tarver joked after watching the clip. "They're even putting a video on of Jones just before my press conference."

If Tarver is anything, he's confident. He's also brash, articulate and ready to talk. And though this fight never really needed a lot of selling, Tarver would have been the one peddling tickets if it had struggled at the gate.

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“We’re going to have 17,000 people there because Antonio carried this promotion,” DeGuardia said.

Even though he didn’t talk, the name “Roy Jones Jr.” helped sell many, if not most, of those tickets.

“People know this could be the last Roy Jones sighting,” Tarver said. “He believes he can knock me off this throne. No. It’s not going to happen. I figure he’ll show up wearing Air Jordans (so he can run).”

Asked if he thought the return of Roy Jones Sr., to the Jones camp after a 12-year absence will make any difference, Tarver said it means Jones will have his father – someone with compassion – in his corner to throw in the towel if things get out of hand.

“I bring families back together,” Tarver laughed. “I should be commended.”

His plan for the fight?

“I’m coming with all guns blazing,” he said. “The stage is set for something humongous.”

He’s expecting to hear something from Jones late Saturday night.