

Rahman-Toney Fight Predictions

Written by TSS Press
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Live Saturday night from Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City, in a fight broadcast on HBO, Hasim Rahman defends his heavyweight crown against James "Lights Out" Toney. Toney's tough and he knows it, talks the talk and has the skills to back it up. Rahman is more nuanced, harder to decipher, less developed in and out of the ring. Aside from a couple of amazing nights, Rock has let us down almost as many times as Toney has buoyed us up. But Saturday's fight in A.C., while not for the whole ball of wax, has serious ramifications for the immediate future of the heavyweight division. This is how The Sweet Science writers see Hasim Rahman vs. James Toney.

How did Rahman get to this point? He defeated his good friend Monte Barrett in a tepid performance his last fight. Before that Rahman beat a collection of fighters that would best be described as average. He lost to John Ruiz. He lost to Holyfield when his head nearly exploded. He drew with David Tua in a boring fight, and Lennox Lewis knocked him out. Let's see – oh, that's right – before that he knocked out Lewis to become heavyweight champion. That's how he got here. He's still treading on the goodwill that beating Lewis brought him. Despite that victory, I don't think much of Rahman. He was involved in a terrific brawl with the South African Corrie Sanders, which he won and he looked good against David Tua the first time they met, but what has he done lately? Beat Monte Barrett? At least James Toney defeated John Ruiz (albeit on steroids) and has fought some decent guys with good records in the last couple of years. I'll go with the hungrier fighter here, which is Toney, literally and figuratively. I think Toney wants to prove himself at heavyweight while Rahman is just cashing-in another big-fight check. So Toney by decision.

Mitch Abramson

It's hard to see Toney losing this one. He's smarter, quicker and just plain better than Rahman, whose inconsistency over the last six years is legendary. Rahman's only chance is to lean on Toney and make it a rough-and-tumble affair, but he'll likely be outworked by Toney's brilliant counterpunches, especially at close range. Rahman may have been exposed in the Lennox Lewis rematch, when he was shut out before being flattened with a perfect right hand. Rock is good, but he's not a Hall-of-Famer. Toney is. "Lights Out" by split decision.

Matthew Aguilar

As much as I want to root for James Toney, I can't help but think of an equipment malfunction caused by Toney's bulging belly and love handles blowing out shorts. Can they stop a fight if a boxer blows out his britches? Indeed, I fear we'll find out Saturday. I also fear James Toney might not have the stamina he needs to face off with Hasim Rahman, especially if Toney has 260 or more pounds on his 5-foot-9 frame. That's just not a good combination. While it's a "free" broadcast put on by HBO, Toney's weight does leave an alarming task for the broadcast crew. How in the world will Jim Lampley or Larry Merchant be heard with the ever-increasing wheeze coming from Toney? I know it's not a beauty contest, but conditioning is still part of boxing for a reason. Rahman will win this before all the rounds play out – much to my dismay.

Jesse K. Cox

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James Toney is short, fat, old and bald, but he's still one of the best fighters of our generation. Rahman is, well, taller. Toney puts Hasim's "Lights Out" in the 10th.

Rick Folstad

My prediction is tempered by the fact I was able to witness Rahman in camp, while I haven't seen Toney. What I do know is Rahman is in tremendous shape and that he can slug. I don't know what type of condition Toney is in, and I don't know if he can take a true heavyweight punch. I'm confident Toney's elusive style will make Rahman look foolish at times, but I also think Rahman's trainer, Thel Torrance, will figure out the puzzle. Torrance has been in the corner of several Toney opponents, including Montell Griffin (two wins over Toney), Mike McCallum (draw, majority decision for Toney) and Vassiliy Jirov (fight of the year). I'm leaning toward Rahman, but it will have to be by knockout because if it goes the distance, Toney's boxing skills likely will have won him enough rounds.

Tim Graham

After reading all the press, the stellar article on the history of both fighters' trainers, I am going to go with James Toney. No years of boxing wisdom on the written page OR in the ring are going into this decision – I just prefer Toney to Rahman. Like him or not he's a force with a personality and the skills to take the championship. The fight will go the distance and Toney will be the winner by UD.

Amy Green

James will quit on his stool when a seven-course meal, paid for by the Rock, is served between rounds and he loses all animosity towards his opponent. And let's be perfectly clear: these are two very flawed fighters and no one should mistake this for a terrific match. In his prime, Greg Page would have beaten both guys easily. The best reason to watch is to see if at any point Rahman lands atop Jim Lampley's head. Rahman TKO9 Toney.

Michael Katz

When you look back at their respective fights against John Ruiz it becomes difficult to make a compelling case for Rahman. Using Ruiz as a barometer might not be fair, but think about it: When he and Rahman went at it in Atlantic City it looked like Ruiz was fighting Ruiz for 12 rounds. Contrast that with all the trouble Toney gave the Quiet Man and (if you discount the steroid angle) this one shapes up as a comfortable win for Toney – in a pretty ugly fight.

George Kimball

I've made a rule that I don't bet against James Toney, but the same rule doesn't apply to making predictions. So I'll go against Toney here, but certainly not with my wallet, when he faces a top heavyweight in Hasim Rahman. I don't count Rydell Booker and Holyfield as real heavyweights, and John Ruiz is, well, John Ruiz, while Dominick Guinn has disappointed everyone. Still, Toney won those bouts and that is why he is here now. In the past Rahman has fought at the level of his opposition but under new trainer Thel Torrance I have seen a lot to like in the Rock. If he fights with a focus on the jab and hammering over the top with his big right hand, Rahman can control the bout. He should pepper Toney to the ample midsection to take some steam out of Lights Out. If he stays to a similar game plan he can win, if he fights in close it will be Toney's fast hands and countering that steal the bout. I don't make any bones about

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James Toney's weight, he can come in as heavy as he wants and still last 12 rounds and win; he knows how to apply Economics to the Sweet Science so forget about weight issues. Rahman has kept his weight in check recently – around 235 – and I think he will be fine as well. This is a tough, close fight to call and I wanted to call it a Draw, but that's not much of a prediction, so let's make it Rahman by Split Decision as this one should go the route.

Joey Knish

I once made an unforgivable error: I picked Dominick Guinn to beat Toney. I didn't feel secure about my pick, but I had this feeling a perfect Guinn might materialize and edge out a blubbery, lazy, unfocused Toney. Boy, was I wrong. Worse, the pick felt like a betrayal. After pummeling Jirov, Holyfield, and Ruiz...and considering his matchless skills, smarts, and toughness, I vowed never to pick against him. Or if I did – Vitali Klitschko might've been a tall order? – think loooooong and hard about it. I make no bones about it, I love the guy! I love the way he fights, I love the way he trash talks. I even find him oddly charming. None of this would count if he wasn't such a Winner. In the other hand, Hasim Rahman, Goliath, is he a "winner"? Well, one fated night he was. But there have been many others when he was just another underachieving big man. I believe Toney when he says the bigger the better. He brings Aikido principles to the ring, using another's strength and energy against him; the more they give, the more he takes. (A greater threat to him would be a speedy mover who won't stand and fight.) Toney by UD.

Zachary Levin

There's an episode of Seinfeld in which George Costanza decides he's been making the wrong choices in life because he always says and does what he thinks. When he chooses opposite of what he normally would choose, he has amazing success. My heart tells me a decent heavyweight should blow through a decent middleweight, possibly even knocking him out ala Johnson-Ketchel. Rahman may be a chronic underachiever but should still be able to take Toney, however the George Costanza in me tells me Toney just might beat up the larger Rahman, showing us all why sometimes it pays not to mess with bullies. Sometimes bullies are bullies not because they're full of bravado but because they enjoy beating people up. Toney will taunt, confuse and spank Rahman en route to a unanimous decision via the Fatman factor.

Scott Mallon

The fact that Rahman was training for Vitali Klitschko should give him an edge, but he has become very lethargic lately. Toney is always somewhat lethargic, but is so gifted he can win fights on talent alone. Although I had publicly picked Rahman a few weeks ago, as the fight nears I'm favoring Toney to win as he always does – by conducting a boxing clinic. Toney W 12.

Bob Mladinich

This fight is another interesting one. With this, as well as Klitschko vs. Byrd and the Brewster title fight all in the near future, the deteriorating division will finally have some clarity. Rahman vs. Toney all depends on which versions of the two show up on Saturday night. If James Toney can come in around 225 or 230 he should be able to win this fight with ease. Hasim Rahman can even that out though if he has his own weight under control. Rahman's greatest performance as of late was his four round destruction of Kali Meehan back in 2004 in which he was a lean, chiseled 232. Due to V. Klitschko the coward, Rahman has been pretty inactive in the past year and a half but I don't see it hurting him too much. Both fighters have the tools to

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beat each other, Rahman with his vicious jab and jackhammer right cross, and Toney with his elusive counter punching style and amazing speed (even as a fat man). However Rahman keeps claiming he's going to stand in front of Toney and KO him. This is where I see Rahman losing a title that he never even won. We have all seen time and time again, regardless of weight class and body fat percentage, that James Toney is at his absolute best when his opponents stand in the pocket and try to take his head off. I'll take James Toney by a less than spectacular, yet a well thought out UD.

Alex Stone

Hasim Rahman is a murderous puncher. If the "Rock" consistently connects his punches to James Toney, he will easily retain his title. However, my feeling is that Toney's quicker reflexes will control the fight and "Lights Out" will counterpunch his way to a fourth belt. Toney by unanimous decision.

Aaron Tallent

Last time, I went with the puncher over the boxer. The puncher, Lacy, got worked over. This time I'm choosing the boxer, Toney, over the puncher. Both times, my pick has echoed the wisdom of the oddsmakers. Toney UD12.

Michael Woods

The primary question regarding this contest may be whether or not the fight itself, whoever wins, can bring some positive reviews back to a heavyweight division overshadowed by many lighter classes for many moons. It's only about a fifty-fifty chance at best these guys go at it full tilt for any extended amount of time. Toney will grapple much the way he did against John Ruiz, and if Rahman can't back Toney up, Rahman will probably get slapped around inside and lose a boring decision. The pick here is that Rahman is strong enough to move Toney into punching range and threaten enough damage to keep James in too much of a defensive mode. Rahman stays effectively aggressive enough to take a 116-114 decision.

Phil Woolever