

James Toney Talks Heavyweights

Written by David A. Avila
Tuesday, 18 April 2006 19:00

April showers don't always bring dainty flowers – especially when talking about the heavyweight division and two Americans Chris Byrd and James Toney who both eagerly and earnestly claim superiority.

IBF heavyweight titleholder Byrd travels to Germany Saturday to face former world champion Wladimir Klitschko. Both hold world titles.

On paper, "Lights Out" Toney was within one minute of capturing the WBC heavyweight world title too and fell short.

But unknown to most people, after fighting Hasim Rahman to a majority draw at the Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City, Toney spent the next two and a half weeks in a hospital.

"This is my first interview," said Toney, who was cornered in the Inland area recently watching a local fight show.

Still sick from the flu, Toney attended a fight card at the Agua Caliente Casino in Rancho Mirage to support his fellow fighter Jason Gavern and former foe Dominick Guinn.

It was a good day. Both won.

Sitting down in a large yellowish couch, the IBA heavyweight champion held court with the press.

"Nobody knows I was in the hospital with a lacerated kidney," said Toney, who fought 12 rounds with Rahman a few weeks ago with the judges ruling it a draw. "I won that fight. Didn't I land the better punches?"

Though Toney suffered injuries from kidney punches inflicted by Rahman, he doesn't blame him.

"It was that referee Eddie Cotton," Toney said with his raspy voice and a few chosen colloquialisms. "He was on crack."

Toney said he spent a lot of time in a hyperbaric chamber getting his kidney healed. Hitting the kidneys is illegal but Toney says its part of the game to get away with as much as you can.

"You got to have heart," says the four-division world champion. "Brits ain't got no heart. Guys from the south don't got any heart either. They give up."

Toney is not giving up on his hopes of capturing another heavyweight world title and warns the fans, foes and boxing commentators to not underestimate his ability to fight in a division filled

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with 6-7 behemoths and 275-pound monsters.

“Everybody said don’t get hit by his (Rahman’s) big right hand, he hits hard,” said Toney is falsetto. “He hit me with it and nothing happened. Rahman’s eyes got big as golf balls. What happened to his big right? I laughed at his big right hand.”

Byrd in Germany

Chris Byrd, who defends his IBF world title this weekend against Vladimir Klitschko in Germany, says Rahman was the winner.

“James Toney wasn’t doing anything,” said Byrd after a training session in Las Vegas. “He was just laying on the ropes in some of the rounds. Rahman was doing all of the work.”

Toney laughs at the suggestion that Rahman’s punches were effective.

“He was throwing arm punches,” Toney says.

Moreover, the Michigan native who now lives in Los Angeles detests the television commentators who lambasted him throughout the Rahman match with comments about his weight.

“If I’m a little fat roly-poly, why is everybody trying to avoid me,” said Toney who was refused a fight with Samuel Peter, Klitschko and others.

The always svelte Byrd never endures comments about the softness around his belly, but the softness in his fists.

“Chris Byrd couldn’t hit hard if you paid him,” said Toney. “He’s a good fighter but nobody wants to see his butt dancing around the ring.”

“If I don’t hit so hard, why doesn’t anyone just rush me?” responded Byrd testily. “I don’t see anybody trying to go right through me. I must have something that stops them from rushing me.”

Local fights coming up

Sacramento

Vicente Escobedo (9-0, 9 KOs) faces a stiff test on Friday in his hometown when he meets Daniel Jimenez, 25, in a junior lightweight bout at the Arco Arena. Nine opponents have faced the sharp-shooting Escobedo and nine have fallen. Now he faces another puncher in Jimenez.

In Escobedo’s last fight he met Jesus Perez, a do-or-die type of fighter with numerous losses but some significant wins over guys like undefeated Daniel Maldonado, Hugo Dianzo and others. Though it took six rounds, Escobedo, 24, was able to unlock the combination and end Perez’s night. This time he faces another prospect.

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Jimenez (12-1-1, 7 KOs), who lost in drew in his first two pro fights, hasn't lost since.

At 5-9 he's equal to Escobedo in height and has the power to end his night early. It should be an extremely good test for both fighters.

Escobedo has been touted as the next Golden Boy with his precise punching and quick hands and feet. Quiet and unassuming, he's gathered a large following in a short time. His promoters Golden Boy Promotions are on pins and needles for this bout. For tickets and information call (916) 649-TIXS.

Ensenada

Ensenada, Mexico is the site of a huge match for that area when Roberto "Mako" Leyva, the former WBO strawweight world titleholder, meets fellow Ensenada native Ivan "Choko" Hernandez in a grudge match at Gimnasio Oscar "Tigre" Garcia on Friday, April 21. "These guys hate each other," said Ensenada native Raul Miramontes.

Leyva (23-4-1, 20 KOs) lost his last bout against boxer extraordinaire Ivan "Iron Boy" Calderon at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino two years ago. He hasn't fought since. Mako is moving up two weight divisions.

Hernandez (22-1-1, 13 KOs) stopped Mark "Too Sharp" Johnson in eight rounds two years ago and seemed destined for a sure world title. Then he met Fernando Montiel and was manhandled by the Los Mochis native and eventually stopped in seven rounds. Choko moved up to junior feather for one bout but has now returned to junior bantamweight.

Ontario, California

Thompson Boxing Promotions hosts a fight card on Monday, April 24, at the Doubletree Hotel in Ontario. It was supposed to feature super fast Dominic Salcido but the Rialto boxer reinjured his hand during training. It should still be a pretty strong card including James "Choco" Parison (5-0), a quick-fisted super middleweight fighter out of San Diego who was an outstanding amateur. For tickets and information call (714) 935-0900.

Highland, California

San Manuel Casino has their third show on Thursday, April 27, and will feature Luciano Perez (13-3) of Chicago facing Calvin Odom (14-8) of Inglewood, California in a welterweight contest. The casino had more than 2,800 people attending the last show a few weeks ago. Also on the card will be Fontana's Heather Percival matched against ring tough Tonia Cravens in a six-round bantamweight contest. Percival was supposed to meet world champion Melinda Cooper a few months ago but the fight card was canceled on the last day before the match. Cravens lost a tough match against flashy Kaliesha West in a four-round bout. Her team vowed to only fight six rounds or more. Cravens is a straight-ahead go-for-broke type of fighter while Percival is a box and move stylist. Her jab is her key. For tickets and information call (800) 359-2464.

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Fights on television

Wed. ESPN2, 7 p.m., Kermit Cintron (25-1) vs. David Estrada (18-2)
Fri. ESPN2, 6 p.m., Alonzo Butler (21-0-1) vs. Derek Bryant (18-4-1)
Fri. Telefutura, 9 p.m., Vicente Escobedo (9-0) vs. Daniel Jimenez (12-1-1)
Sat. HBO, 2 p.m., Chris Byrd (39-2-1) vs. Vladimir Klitschko (45-3)