

Taylor-Wright Preview: If

Written by Phil Woolever
Thursday, 15 June 2006 19:00

If middleweight champion Jermain Taylor shows up with the same confident vibe and sustained performance as he did against Daniel Edoud, or in Taylor's better rounds against Bernard Hopkins, Winky Wright is in trouble.

If Wright demonstrates the ability to stay inside flashing point-piling punches like he did against Shane Mosley at 154, or whip and wisp outside like he did against Felix Trinidad at 160, we've got a new champ who can challenge Floyd Mayweather Jr. at premiere pound-for-pound status.

If both elite bruisers come out and throw like they did at their best in the aforementioned situations, Saturday night in Memphis could easily produce the Fight of the Year.

If each fighter resembles the off moments in their most recent performances however, the contest could be one of the most non-compelling title tilts of the season.

If you think I've got a clearly imagined result, sorry. No real clue here.

If there's any "most likely" scenario once the bell rings for Taylor-Wright it's a dramatic encounter. Think James Toney-Reggie Johnson, one of the better middleweight range bouts of the 80's.

If Taylor's addition of Emanuel Steward transfers to even half-prime Tommy Hearns like side-uppercuts, Wright will think his back was born to the ropes.

If Taylor doesn't come out with a Hearns type opening fury, there's a good chance he'll find Wright already gone, all night long.

If you don't think Taylor's pair of controversial victories means anything, you may be right.

If you don't think Wright's near shutout over a faded Trinidad means so much, or that his debatable showing against Sam Soliman proved plenty of power lacking liabilities, you may be right.

If you don't think the principles' skills are convincing enough, you'll have to prove coherency.

If Wright can keep Taylor off and missing, it will gain him further laurels, even harder to dispute. It could also pave the way for a summer'07 classic in England against Joe Calzaghe. It could even put Wright in the driver's seat for the golden ticket to fight the Golden Boy in September.

If Taylor wins it will still never translate to a payday against Oscar de la Hoya, who won't be forgetting his partner Hopkins's body punch. Calzaghe is a lucrative option somewhere down the line. Taylor seems quite satisfied with his current, growing recognition until a huge payday materializes.

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If Taylor beats Wright it may not be until next year that he faces another foe who poses a threat like Wright. That would stretch Taylor's middleweight reign over three calendars. In this day and age that's considerable longevity. Maybe it won't be at 160, but he'll be around awhile.

If Hopkins had a plan endorsing Taylor last week it wasn't clear as he leaned over the ropes for a shout out. Who knows, Hopkins may be hoping for his own trilogy. It also may show that during the course of their contests, Taylor made an impression.

If Hopkins snagged Taylor away from Lou DiBella for Golden Boy it wouldn't be the biggest soap opera plot to come out of boxing, but it sure wouldn't be the dullest, either.

If it's a typical June, Memphis will be hot and sticky. Most Mississippi mosquitoes usually weigh in at around the bantamweight limit.

If you can't enjoy hot and sticky, shame on you. Jump in the river with no Bar-b-Que.

If you see Memphis without getting to the National Civil Rights Museum (at the Lorraine Hotel where Dr. King was murdered) you missed the deeper point, not to mention one of the country's most compelling historical sites.

If you've ever drank too much beer, chomped too many ribs, or been to Beale Street on a primetime Saturday night you understand why Memphis is one of the best backgrounds for sweet scientists on the planet.

If we all tried even a little bit harder we could make it a much better world. Blues. Barbecue at the Blue City Cafe. Boxing. Blessings.

If experienced, underdog technician Wright rides the eye of the storm and keeps his right in the champion's face, there'll be a heckuva party on Beale.

If unpolished, in deep again Taylor keeps charging and cuts off the ring with sweeping hooks, our pick of a pick'em fight, there'll be a heckuva party on Beale.