

## Jeff Lacy Takes Some Time For Himself

Written by Rick Folstad  
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Funny thing about the fight game: A big win can define a career, but a big loss doesn't always destroy one.

It's one of the few times the prize ring shows a little compassion.

Ask Muhammad Ali, Sugar Ray Leonard or Joe Louis.

Except for Rocky Marciano, nobody's perfect.

That's a tough lesson to learn, a lesson St. Petersburg super-middleweight Jeff "Left Hook" Lacy had to come to terms with.

He didn't just lose his IBF title to Joe Calzaghe in Manchester, England this past March. He was taken out back to the woodshed and spanked. He was schooled, humbled, pummeled and sent home with a red face, a bloody nose and a torn shirt.

In one ugly night, Calzaghe took away both Lacy's title and his swagger, left him standing out in the cold with his head bowed, his hat in his hands and his career up for grabs.

Welcome to jolly old England. Enjoy your stay.

Going into the Calzaghe fight, everyone this side of Big Ben thought Lacy would win. Easily. After all, he was coming off a dominating knockout over Robin Reid last August, and an easier win over Scott Pemberton in November.

Suddenly, he was hotter than reality TV, able to leap tall buildings with a single bound.

Undefeated, unfazed and unbeatable.

Joe Calzaghe? Who was he? Who'd he ever fight? Didn't Reid lose a split decision to him? Aren't his people just trying to protect him, keep him out of harm's way?

Ah, those tricky Welsh. How'd we know they were coddling a national treasure?

Knocked down in the 12th and not winning a single round, Lacy came home with that sour taste you get when you don't live up to your own expectations, when you let yourself down.

Maybe what he needed was another fight right away, or as soon as he was healthy. Get him back in the gym and get him a win to help kill the taste. Put a fight or two between himself and that March nightmare and it might help ease the pain.

He tried to get something going, but a proposed fight with Antonio Tarver didn't get past the

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negotiations stage, and then he pulled out of a fight with Alan Green set for October because he didn't think he had enough time to train.

"I'm hoping to maybe fight in December, but if not, I'll fight in January or February," Lacy was quoted as saying in the Tampa Tribune. "I haven't had any time off since 2000. I need this time off and be able to come back in great shape."

He knows what he needs better than anyone, but there's something to be said for climbing right back up on the horse, proving the Calzaghe fiasco was just an anomaly, a bad night in a strange town.

But it's a little late now. The horse is already back in the stable.

"The fighter you saw against Joe Calzaghe was not me," Lacy told the Tribune. "I'm not going to make excuses, but there were a lot of things going on before that fight that most people don't know about. When I come back, things are going to be a lot different."

When you come back?

Can't wait.