

## Being James Toney

Written by Rick Folstad

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James “Lights Out” Toney is like a savvy car salesman trying to sell you one of those “look-what-I-got” sports cars you know you can’t afford. Before you realize it, you’re roaring into your driveway with your new cherry-red Jaguar, convinced you made a steal.

That’s Toney. He’ll tell you he won even when the record book flat out tells you he lost.

At least in my official record book there’s a bold “L” next to his Sept. 2, 2006 heavyweight fight against Samuel “The Nigerian Nightmare” Peter.

Still, if you listen to Toney rant and rave long enough—buy into his spiel—pretty soon you’ll start to doubt the accuracy of the record book.

Maybe they did make a mistake. Maybe he didn’t lose a split decision to Peter.

“For everybody out there, I do not have a loss,” Toney claimed on a conference call last month, enlightening all of us to the truth as Toney sees it while pointing out the obvious typo on his record. “I have not lost in 10 years and that loss (to Peter) did not even count.”

Well James, we’re pretty sure it did.

Too bad you can’t wish a bad decision away or ignore it. We’d all be undefeated.

But that’s all right. It’s just Toney being Toney, a guy who is almost as slick outside the ring as he is inside it.

So how do you bet against a guy like that?

Maybe you don’t. Maybe you either put your money on Toney or put it safely away in your pocket. I know I’ll never bet against him.

When Toney (69-5-3, 43 KOs) fights Peter (27-1, 22 KOs) on Saturday night in their WBC title eliminator at the Seminole Hard Rock Casino in Hollywood, Fla., (SHOWTIME), we’ll probably already have a pretty good idea how he’ll do. If he quivers like Jell-o at the weigh-in, it could be another close fight. If he stands on the scale with just a hint of new muscle tone, hock your watch, empty your savings account and bet everything you’ve got on Toney to win big.

Just don’t expect good odds.

Why should we see a slimmer, trimmer James Toney this time around? Because of fitness guru Billy Blanks, who was hired by Toney to, among other things, get rid of the flab. And there’s been slabs of it surrounding Toney for years, protecting him from the harsh cold of the Southern California winters.

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So, James, can we expect a different kind of performance from you this second time around?

“My strategy is whatever he wants to do, we have got to take care of him,” Toney said. “I can fight against the ropes, in the middle of the ring. So whatever he wants to do, we will do, just like I said before the first time I beat him. This time, however, I am going to do it more soundly. It is going to be terrible what is going to happen to him.”

As for Peter, a hard hitter from Africa, this whole Toney thing must seem like a crazy joke, a kind of “Welcome to America” bad dream. He beat the guy once and now he’s got to beat him again.

A fistic double jeopardy.

“James Toney will not change at all,” Peter said when asked if he thought he would be facing a different James Toney in the second fight. “He will never change.”

The good news is, Peter should be confident. Going into the rematch, he has the reassuring thought that at least a couple guys outside his own camp thought he beat Toney that first time out.

The bad news is, Toney wasn’t one of them.