

RJJ: Glass Chinned Bum Or Top P4P?

Written by Robert Mladinich
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Four division champion Roy Jones Jr. of Pensacola, Florida, who has won world titles from middleweight to heavyweight, has always been a study in contrasts. While many fans watched in awe as he easily beat one lesser opponent after another, his legions of detractors accused him of ducking the most significant challengers available to him.

Jones regularly declared how fearless and unbeatable he was, but would counter his own argument by insisting that he didn't want to end up like Gerald McClellan or the late Jerry Quarry, both of whom were severely brain-damaged from the not-so-sweet science.

Most people couldn't fathom why Jones would have such grave concerns, because for most of his career he was never even hit solidly. That is why it is so difficult to comprehend why he is still fighting. He lost three of his last four bouts, two by debilitating knockout to Glen Johnson and Antonio Tarver. The last time the 38-year-old Jones laced them up was last July, when he outpointed the tough but limited Prince Badi Ajamu in Boise, Idaho.

Jones, 50-4 (38 KOs), is back in action this Saturday, July 14, at the Mississippi Coast Coliseum in Biloxi against Anthony "The Tyger" Hanshaw, 21-0-1 (14 KOs), a native of Massillon, Ohio, who now lives and trains in Las Vegas. What Jones expects to get out of a fight with Hanshaw, who has spent most of his career as a super middleweight, is anyone's guess.

Even more perplexing is why he would be fighting Hanshaw on pay-per-view on the same night that HBO is presenting a tremendous "free" triple header featuring Antonio Margarito, Arturo Gatti and Kermit Cintron in separate competitive bouts.

"This is prime evidence that Jones has a grossly inflated opinion of his worth," said Steve Farhood, a commentator on Showtime's ShoBox: The New Generation, which has broadcast several of Hanshaw's fights. "What fight fan is going to pay for Jones-Hanshaw when they can watch three good welterweight fights for 'free?' I wouldn't want to have to depend on the pay-per-view revenue from this fight to pay for my summer vacation."

The 29-year-old Hanshaw was an accomplished amateur who has hit many snags during his pro career, which began in June 2000. Injuries, as well as other logistical problems, have resulted in large periods of inactivity. He is best known for taking part in ShoBox's super middleweight tournament, where he battled Jean Paul Mendy of France to a draw in the January 2007 finale. Against Jones, he has nothing to lose and everything to gain.

"Even though Jones is damaged goods, Hanshaw will benefit hugely from a spectacular win over him," said Farhood. "The powers that be will realize that he is a world class fighter."

One certainty about this fight is the fact that Jones has done nothing to improve his likeability factor.

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He has an uncanny ability to rub even his closest friends and colleagues the wrong way. The often arrogant Jones, who said he didn't have time to attend pre-fight broadcast meetings while working as an HBO analyst, is much more of a championship caliber alienator than fighter. When he departed HBO, few, if any, tears were shed for him.

In the weeks leading up to this fight, he has stated to anyone who would listen that he was still the world's best pound-for-pound fighter. He even criticized Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Oscar De La Hoya for doing exactly what he was always accused of: being tactically brilliant but aesthetically displeasing. He has utilized armed security personnel to ban Hanshaw from training at a gym near the fighting venue. An enraged Hanshaw has been forced to drive 40 minutes to train at the Gulfport Boxing Gym.

"We fly in from Las Vegas and they tell us we are barred from the training center," said an enraged Hanshaw. "What kind of nonsense is that? Is this the great, legendary Roy Jones who pretends to be a classy gentleman or is this Roy Jones the egomaniac who thinks he's running boxing? He got knocked out by Tarver and Johnson and now he's going to get knocked out by me."

Hanshaw's trainer, the inimitable Floyd Mayweather Sr., had an even harsher assessment.

"Jones is a glass-chinned bum who will get starched by my Tyger in six rounds," he said. "He thinks it is all about Roy, but what it's really all about is Tony knocking this guy out. Good riddance to bad rubbish, I say."

Many people believe that it would be in Jones's best interests to say good riddance. By forging ahead in such a brutal and unforgiving sport, he is putting his health and his legacy at risk. The knockouts he suffered against Tarver and Johnson were downright frightening.

His former manager, Fred Levin, who cared greatly about him but whom Jones no longer has any use for, said that the fighter always told him he would retire once he lost. Levin urged Jones to quit after he beat WBA heavyweight champion John Ruiz in 2003, but Jones insisted on moving back down to the light heavyweight, which was the beginning of his downfall.

As great as Jones once was, the public never embraced him the way they did Evander Holyfield, who although in his mid-forties is still somewhat of an attraction. The refusal of Jones and Holyfield to retire might make them kindred fistic spirits, but the differences between the two end there. Holyfield was, and to a degree still is, embraced by the public for his civility and willingness to take on any and all opponents. Jones, on the other hand, continues to alienate nearly everyone he comes in contact with.

"I have become disappointed in Roy," said Farhood. "Not from a boxing sense, but for other reasons. He had the opportunity to carry on a legacy much in the way Muhammad Ali did. He is a man of conscience and principle, but in his later years he seems to have withdrawn into his own world. In doing so he has alienated both the press and the fans."

There is no doubt that Jones will continue on in what TSS's managing editor Michael Woods

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has called his “quixotic quest to turn back the clock.” By doing so, he is engaging in a frightful dance. You need not look beyond the current plights of other offensive and defensive maestros like Ali and Wilfred Benitez to realize what a perilous path Jones is on.

I want to believe that underneath all of the arrogance, Jones is a nice man. More than anything else, it seems that his insecurities and resentments prevent him from showing that side of himself to the world. While he always prided himself on being different, he is now proving to be just another conformist.

Instead of leaving the sport that treated him so regally with his head held high, his faculties intact, his bank account hefty, and his place in Canastota ensured, Jones is showing that there is really nothing unique about him after all.

“The ultimate irony is that the knockouts Jones suffered against Tarver and Johnson were brutal,” said Farhood. “The fact that he’s still fighting goes against everything he used to believe. It makes you wonder about the legitimacy of anything he says. I think he needs a reality check.”