Hindsight being what it is, one has to wonder how Jameel “Big Time” McCline became such a marketable commodity in the malaise of the heavyweight division.

Many fight fans noticed McCline for the first time in July, 2001 when he walked out from his corner at the sound of the opening bell against the not-yet-tainted Superstar of The Hopeful, Michael Grant, cracked him once, and his night’s work was done. With the first punch of the night McCline parlayed a perfectly placed left hook into a career building bout.

That punch, which caused Grant to fold like an accordion, rendered the one shining hope of the heavyweight division unable to continue, and catapulted McCline into the minds and mouths of everyone who witnessed the sudden devastation.

We tuned in to see Michael Grant, with all his physical talent and choir boy looks, who we hoped would give us reason to believe his brutal TKO 2 defeat the year before at the heavy hands of royalty in the name of Lennox Lewis was merely the case of a kid in way over his head. Grant’s bout prior to the title shot against Lewis saw him hit the canvas twice in the opening three minutes against Andrew Golota.

Golota, seemingly all too aware that a victory over Grant in their 1999 WBC title eliminator meant another bout with Lewis, did not end things with the 6’ 7” 250 pound Grant when he had the opportunity. Instead, Grant survived the first round and Golota took the exit, refusing to continue after being knocked down by Grant in the tenth round. That Golota was knocked out in the first round by Lewis likely played into his decision not to continue, preferring Grant go forward to receive the beat-down that awaited the “winner”.

Golota, it turns out, was right. And the rest of us were all wrong about Grant.

So, when Jameel McCline stepped up the big time and erased what was left of our heavyweight hopes, perhaps the focus should likely have been placed on how Grant had disappointed, as opposed to how great this 6’ 6” 265 pound kid McCline just might be. Glanced over was the fact that “Big Time” started his career 2-2-1, I mean, didn’t you see how he crushed Grant? And we all know how good Grant is . . . or was . . . or was supposed to be . . . and so it went.

The vision of McCline cracking the china chin of Michael Grant lives on and as a result so does the ability to market Jameel McCline as a heavyweight contender. Now 37 years old and with 38 victories to counter 7 career defeats, McCline was set for another good payday as the selected “opponent” to be featured in Vitali Klitschko’s much anticipated ring return. Having already been stopped by Wladimir in ten rounds, McCline was looking to hit the brotherly double play pay day, and likely to a similar fate. The potential bout with Vitali was perfect in that it represented a good paycheck despite the inevitable outcome. All of that has unraveled of course as McCline versus DaVarryl Williamson has been made for October 6th in New York while Vitali Klitschko plans his next move.

In meeting Williamson on Showtime, “Big Time” McCline gets a high risk opponent for a smaller financial reward. With 20 KOs in 24 victories, the 39 year old “Touch of Sleep” has lived up to his nickname and has been in exciting fights including 3 of his 4 losses which also ended early – that makes for 23 of his 28 professional fights not making it to the final bell. McCline, however, hasn’t really lived up to his “Big Time” moniker. He hasn’t been as explosive as 23 knockout victories might suggest, and at some points has seemed to be lacking the will or desire to succeed.

Against DaVarryl Williamson next month, Jameel McCline can set himself up for another meaningful bout, or fade from the heavyweight division. The fight looks like one that will be determined less by style and ability but more by heart and determination. At this point as the two men approach 40, it’s anyone’s guess which fighter that may be.