

Jermain Taylor: I'm Going To Be Ready

Written by Michael Woods

Wednesday, 16 January 2008 19:00

We've been fixated on Saturday's showdown here at TSS but that doesn't mean we forget there are other meaningful matches on the near horizon. At or near the top of our Must See list is the Pavlik/Taylor rematch, which unfurls on Feb. 16, at the MGM Grand in Vegas.

We are curious to see how Taylor responds. He has a new trainer, or an old/new trainer, father figure Ozell Nelson, who replaces Emanuel Steward.

We must throw some kudos at the promoters, and the fighters, who are getting it on again just four months after their first classic battle. Pavlik (32-0), the 25-year-old Ohioan who marched patiently up the ladder, from hopeful, to prospect, to contender, to champion, believes he will again impose his will on Taylor, the Arkansan who is hoping to reclaim his old nickname, "Bad Intentions," a month from now.

Here is some Q and A action, Michael Katz' favorite format, from the 29-year-old Taylor (27-1), trainer Nelson, and promoter DiBella.

Q) You're OK not fighting for a belt this time?

Taylor: "When I win, I'll be walking out of there with everything he took from me. I'm walking out of there with my pride."

Is it working out better without Emanuel?

"It feels great. It's just like the old days. When we started out it was just me and Ozell. I'm working hard every day. I'm doing a lot more sparring. Emanuel Steward is a great guy, a Hall of Fame trainer and a friend of mine. I love him to death. But he isn't coaching me now."

Why is the unconventional training necessary, using the sledgehammer, tire and tennis balls?

"The tennis balls are for slipping punches, so I don't get hit with the punches I got hit with in the fight. As far as the tire, it gives you muscle and endurance. I had him hurt in the second round and I didn't finish him. If I had the endurance, I wouldn't have gotten tired. I would have finished him."

What kind of changes are you making in this training camp?

"A lot harder training. Ozell's putting me through all kinds of stuff. Me and him together, there's nothing that's going to stop us. I've been doing a lot more running. I've been running five miles a day except Sunday. I'm running every day, serious running and I'm training hard with commitment and I'm going to be ready."

Ozell Nelson / Head Trainer:

Q) What is it going to take for Jermain to win his upcoming rematch fight with Kelly Pavlik?

Nelson: "Hard work, dedication, commitment and total focus. Jermain has to get back to the basics, the way he used to do in the gym. So far I'm very pleased with the way Jermain has approached training camp."

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Regarding Emanuel Steward's departure.....

"It was more of a communication gap with Manny. The chemistry was great in training camp, but when it came fight time, it just did not carry over in the ring. We learned a lot from Manny and I will use some of the same techniques he was working with Jermain on."

Was there anything that sticks out that Emanuel was working on with Jermain that you will apply?

"One thing that sticks out in my mind was the way Manny was trying to get Jermain to move side to side. Rolling with the right hand. Things like that. That's very important and we'll stay with that."

Why go for the rematch right away?

"Talking with Jermain after the fight, and then knowing what I saw when Jermain got tired, I knew what was wrong. It was endurance. I knew what it was, and I knew we could fix it, so that's why."

Lou DiBella, president of DiBella Entertainment:

"Jermain looks more determined than I have ever seen him. Physically, he is in the best shape of his career and is going through one of his most grueling training camps. There is no doubt on February 16th Jermain will be ready for anything that Kelly brings to the ring."

"Taylor-Pavlik I on September 29th was a historic battle that ended in Round 7. I along with boxing fans around the world can't wait for Round 8 to start on February 16th."

FYI: Tickets are priced at \$600, \$400, \$300, \$200 and \$100 are on sale at MGM Grand Arena Box Office. Tickets will also be sold at all Las Vegas Ticketmasters locations (select Smith's Food and Drug Centers, Macy's West at the Fashion Show Mall, and Ritmo Latino.) Ticket sales are limited to eight (8) per person. To charge by phone with a major credit card, call Ticketmaster at 702-474-4000 or MGM Grand 800-929-1111. Tickets are also available for purchase at www.mgmgrand.com or www.ticketmaster.com

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