

Tarver's Training For A Four Rounder

Written by Michael Woods
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If I were a betting man, and I'm not, because I am neither overly lucky nor blessed with the sort of inside information that is needed to come out ahead in that fool's errand, I would be laying down some bread on Clinton Woods (41-3-1, 24 KOs) to beat Antonio Tarver (26-4, 19 KOs) on April 12 in Florida.

Both men are on the elderly side for fighters, with "No Relation" Woods the junior dance partner, at 35 four years younger than Tarver.

But being that both guys are several years beyond the supposed apex of performance for the average male, it makes more sense to look at how each man has looked lately.

Woods hasn't lost since 2004, when he dropped a decision to rival Glen Johnson. He drew with Johnson three months after the loss, and has since avenged that L, with a 2006 SD win over the Road Warrior. Anyone going 1-1-1 with Johnson, who always is ready to rock, and is in your face, trying to make you quit, is no dog. He's on a six fight win streak, and seems primed to show Americans, in his second fight in the States, that he's come a long way since dropping a TKO6 to Roy Jones in Oregon in 2002.

Tarver, on the other hand, looked shaky against Elvir Muriqi last June, and was given a gift-wrapped gimme in Danny Santiago in December. He just slipped by Muriqi, and didn't have to exert himself much against the overmatched Santiago, a pudgy light heavyweight who could be campaigning at 154 if he adhered to a severe dietary regimen.

That compare and contrast aside, my eyes bugged out when I heard Tarver's recent statement about his outlook on the April showdown in Florida with Woods, the IBF's 175 pound champion.

"I'm getting too old to go 12 rounds," said Tarver, who'll be defending the IBO's 175 pound strap. "I can only go four. I'm not going to waste any time. I'm going to go in and take him out. I'm not at an age to be tussling for twelve rounds."

I pondered emptying my IRA and putting everything on Woods, but I have to consider that maybe the Floridian is playing possum, verbally, and trying to lure Woods into thinking he'll not have the stamina to go 12.

Since this one figures to go the distance—Tarver has never been stopped, and Woods has been stopped just once, by Jones—that statement had to have Woods chomping at the bit.

Tarver, who has stopped foes in just two of his last nine outings, is saying that he'll put a hurting on Woods, and end it early.

"This is going to be a tough fight for me," Tarver said. "He's coming after my belt. I'm going to need all of you to come out and support me. Make no mistake about it, I'm gonna knock him

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out!

“I’m going to punish Woods for the lack of respect that I and my entire team received in London.”

Woods certainly didn’t seem cowed.

“Tarver hasn’t fought anyone,” the Englishman said. “Since he came to England all he did was talk trash. All I did was talk trash back. He needs to stop being such a diva. He will have a reality check on April 12.

“I’m sure it will be a long hard night for Tarver. I will do whatever it takes to beat him. It will be a great fight for the crowd and those watching on Showtime.”

“I can't wait to get in the ring and kick his butt!”

What about it, TSS Universe? You think Tarver is playing mind games with Woods, trying to convince him that he’s dogging it in training, playing the “I’m old and frail, don’t hurt me” card?

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