Looks like they got the nickname right.

Antonio Tarver is the “Magic Man.” He somehow keeps pulling wins out of his hat like so many rabbits. Poof: Clinton Woods. Poof: Glen Johnson. Poof: Roy Jones Jr.

He loses to guys like Johnson, Jones and Eric Harding, but gets his revenge the next time around.

So what’s the trick? Mirrors, hidden doors, optical illusions? How about a magical right hook?

Tarver (27-4, 19 KOs) will need a full bag of tricks when he faces “Bad” Chad Dawson on Saturday night (SHOWTIME) at the Palms Casino Resort in Las Vegas for Tarver‘s IBF light-heavyweight title.

Undefeated in 26 fights, Dawson gave up his WBC belt just to fight Tarver. The Magic Man isn’t impressed.

“Chad Dawson can’t carry my jock strap,“ Tarver said in a recent interview. “He ain’t worthy. He’s going to make one mistake with me and it’s good night. Fighting me, he’s going into uncharted waters. What (Dawson’s people) refuse to tell him is that I am the most dangerous, the smartest, most intelligent fighter he is ever going to face. I‘m going to make him respect his elders.”

Talk is cheap, especially when you see Tarver in street clothes and you immediately think, “certified public accountant,” or “insurance adjuster.”

Than you see him at work under the lights doing some sleight of hand and you mutter to yourself, “how’d he do that? Just how good is this guy?“

When Tarver fought Clinton Woods in April, it was more clinic than prize fight. He didn’t beat Woods, he schooled him, took him out back to the woodshed and tanned his hide.

After the fight, Woods stood up and humbly claimed he had just been beaten by the best light-heavyweight in the world, which was saying a lot considering Johnson and Dawson were standing a rock’s throw away from where Woods was doing his personal handicapping.

Like him or not, what Tarver does best is find ways to win. He has that awkward, off-beat style that somehow works for him. Sure, that didn’t work in a loss to Bernard Hopkins, but whose style does work against Hopkins? Guys like Hopkins come around once in 25 years.

Besides, Tarver still holds tight to that excuse that he wasn’t in the right frame of mind against Hopkins. He was just off the Rocky movie set with Sly Stallone and he claims he was still more

movie star at the time than fighter. In his head, anyway.

So take Tarver for what he's worth, a sly, durable, tricky boxer who is dangerous any time he gets in the ring. And at 39 quickly closing in on 40, he hasn't put on the hard miles most fighters his age have. He started late, turning pro at 28. He's just catching up.

Now, if he'd just quit complaining.

Dawson, meanwhile, is more the quiet type. He doesn't seem to get riled until he's pushed right to the edge. And Tarver likes to shove.

The same night Tarver beat Woods, Dawson was in the co-main event fighting Johnson. It was a close fight, but Dawson got the win. The crowd at the St. Pete Times Forum in Tampa booed, but most of the writers at ringside saw it in Dawson's favor.

Now Dawson, in his prime at 26, gets his shot at the guy he calls "Anphonyo" Tarver.

"We're going to get in there and I'm going to do my job and I'm going to leave the ring with his title (belt) around my waist," Dawson said.

In his fight with Johnson in April, Dawson was forced to reach deep. He was tested maybe for the first time in his career, and he came out on top. Without that fight, without that win over Johnson, he wouldn't be fighting Tarver on Saturday.

"I needed that fight," Dawson said. "I beat the best light-heavyweight in the world that night when I beat Glen Johnson. Everybody knows that. Johnson came at me and pressured me. He remained strong, he threw a lot of punches and he kept coming. It was a great fight. We fought our hearts out. And Tarver is no Glen Johnson."

He's just the Magic Man.