

Jones vs. Hopkins, Winner Take More: Borges'll Buy That

Written by Ron Borges

Thursday, 20 August 2009 19:00

Maybe the end game for Roy Jones, Jr. finally revealed itself Thursday night during a radio talk show in Houston, TX.

Ever since Joe Calzaghe slapped Jones silly for the better part of 12 rounds nine months ago, it has been curious to watch Jones searching, apparently aimlessly, for fights few people cared about. He has beaten the likes of Omar Shieka, a never was, and Jeff Lacy, a sad used to be who himself never recovered from the beating Calzaghe gave him several years ago. But what was the point of it all? A fight for a lesser form of the cruiserweight title against comebacking Danny Green in Australia?

That appears to be where Jones is headed next after beating up the half defenseless and half senseless Lacy in a show few people chose to buy on independent pay-per-view a week ago. At least it seemed that way until Jones got on the phone to the Calvin Murphy radio show Thursday night at the request of a friend.

Already on the show was perhaps the only man left in boxing he could make any real money with – his old nemesis and long-time rival, Bernard Hopkins. The two have danced and darted around each other for 16 years since they first engaged in one of the most boring fights in boxing history back in 1993.

Jones won but when you left ringside two thoughts crossed your mind. First, what's so hot about Roy Jones, Jr.? Second, how did Hopkins ever get the nickname "The Executioner?"

It was a long night of fistic passivity with Jones prevailing as much on reputation as for anything he actually did to Hopkins. Then again, Hopkins didn't do anything to make him deserving of winning either so who could complain? Jones won that night because Hopkins didn't seem too interested in fighting. So it goes.

As Hopkins improved over the years and Jones went up in weight they would periodically talk about a rematch but money always got in the way, it seemed. In those days it was Jones who was making the demands. Thursday night, things were different. Now it was Jones who was making the kind of proposal Hopkins should have, and not so many years ago would have, accepted.

Below is a transcript of some of their exchange supplied by one of Jones' public relations men, the inimitable Ed Keenan. It was, unlike most of Jones' fights, interesting to say the least.

Bernard Hopkins: Money has been the issue for the past ten years with us.

Roy Jones: How much will you give me?

BH: I will make it a 60:40 split

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RJ: How about 60 to the winner and 40 to the loser?

BH: Now you want to make a contest out of it. I don't need Roy Jones. It could wind up in the judges hands and you never know what will happen.

RJ: You pick the judges.

BH: If RJ will take 40, we can get it done before the year is out. But if not...

RJ: He already has an L on his record from me and he is trying to make me take 40 so he can prove that I am the lesser man. But if you will make it 60 to the winner and 40 to the loser I will take my chances with that.

BH: Do you think I would make more money fighting Roy Jones than I would a young stud like (Tomasz) Adamek or (Chad) Dawson (both of whom he could have already fought by the way but he low-balled each to the point he knew the fight would not be made, which is an old way of avoidance long practiced in boxing)?

RJ: Bernard doesn't want to fight me. Why would he want to fight me? He's having fun now at this point in his career. He doesn't want to take that gamble.

BH: Is Roy willing to go on record to take 40% win, lose or draw?

Show Producer: How about the winner-take-all?

RJ: That's even better for me.

Show Producer: Bernard are you there?

RJ: No. When you said winner-take-all you ran him off the phone. He's been doing that to me for 5 years now. He disappeared. That's what happens to me every time."

Although it was clearly a stunt for Jones to call in, the by-play was fascinating. Hopkins and Jones have now reversed roles. It is Jones who now needs Hopkins if he is to cash one last big paycheck, while for Hopkins, Jones is an opponent for which the reward may not be worth the risk any more.

So what's a guy to do? Once Jones used to be the fighter called out at press conferences and on call-in shows like this one. Always he responded, as Hopkins did on Thursday, with a disdainful refusal to negotiate or, frankly, to fight. He and Antonio Tarver went through that for years before Jones' hand was finally forced and he lost to him three times (he got the win in the first fight but frankly didn't deserve it and lost the other two in one-sided fashion, once by knockout).

Now it seems Hopkins is following suit but the fact of the matter is if either of them want to get one last big payday they need the other to do it. The reason why is the same for both of them –

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Joe Calzaghe.

Calzaghe slapped each of them silly, thus reducing their value considerably in the market place even after Hopkins gave then undefeated middleweight champion Kelly Pavlik a boxing lesson 10 months ago in his last appearance in the ring.

Hopkins has not fought since, but did block a fight with Adamek by offering him considerably less than chump change to meet. Now Jones has put out a proposal that makes perfect sense and would even drum up some interest.

A 60-40 split with the breakdown to be decided by who won would actually make it a fight worth paying attention to. Watching it might be a stretch but if both sides were fighting with 20 per cent of millions of dollars to be decided by how hard and how well one fought against the other it would be fabulous theatre and create dramatic tension and some interest simply because of the unique nature of the proposal.

Will Bernard Hopkins take the bait? Probably not but he should. Fact is, 40 per cent of the purse they could generate together is very likely more than 100 per cent of what either could generate on his own.

Jones-Green? Thanks but no thanks but I'll watch any interviews in which Green's wife is at his side.

Hopkins-Adamek? I'll take it for free but not for \$29.95.

Hopkins-Dawson? Only if I run out of sleeping pills.

Hopkins-Jones with the winner's share being decided the same way the World Series and the Super Bowl are? I'll buy that.

Now the boxing world has to hope Bernard Hopkins will, too.