

I'd Be Shocked If Hopkins Ever Agreed To Fight Jones Again

Written by Frank Lotierzo

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On February 22, 2005, I wrote a column for TSS entitled, "Hopkins Should Fight Taylor Now Or Never." It was on the heels of Hopkins making his 20th successful defense of his undisputed middleweight title over Howard Eastman. At the time everybody was saying Hopkins will deny his former adviser Lou DiBella's fighter a shot at the title. However, it seemed obvious to me Hopkins wanted to be the first fighter to hand DiBella's fighter his first pro defeat, therefore I was confident Taylor would be Hopkins' next opponent. Shortly after that column was posted, Hopkins-Taylor was announced.

A little over four years later Hopkins is sending signals out about another fight. Only it's doubtful this one will happen. The fight in question is Hopkins fighting a rematch with Roy Jones. Hopkins is one of the smartest fighters I've ever been exposed to. It's hard to conceive he'd take a fight that won't break the bank versus a fighter who is already one up on him. For that reason among others I'd be shocked if Hopkins ever agreed to fight Jones in the future.

Ever since Bernard Hopkins hung up on Roy Jones during the Calvin Murphy radio show a few weeks ago there's been chatter of a possible rematch between them taking place sometime in 2010. For now it's simmered down but don't be surprised if it starts up again. Neither Roy nor Bernard want to hang 'em up and there's not many worthwhile fights out there for them. It's hard to believe after their 1993 middleweight title bout won by Jones via a unanimous decision that they're both still around. Hopkins, who is four months shy of turning 45, is considered the top light heavyweight in the world with the possible exception of Chad Dawson. Jones, who will turn 41 the day after Hopkins turns 45, is considered one of the top five light heavyweights in the world at this time.

Frankly, Hopkins-Jones II (or Jones-Hopkins II) doesn't excite me. Putting their names together sounds and looks good on a theater marquee, but other than being a payday for each other, there's not much else there. Bernard and Roy have had remarkable careers and both are all-time greats. The fact that they're still considered viable says something about how well they've managed their career along with being a testament of how shallow the talent pool in boxing is between middleweight and light heavyweight. Sure, there's a super-middleweight elimination tournament about to begin, but Hopkins-Jones would out-draw any matchup it went up against matching two fighters from the tournament.

When Bernard and Roy fought in 1993, Roy was further along in his development than Bernard was despite Hopkins being 28 and having as many fights. At the time Jones had barely lost four rounds in his previous 21 fights. Hopkins won four of the 12 they fought. However, Jones' style and speed bothered Hopkins then and if they fight in 2010 it'll still be a big factor.

A rematch between them does nothing more than decide the bragging rights between them. Bernard was/is the better technician and he's tougher. Roy is faster and the better boxer. Hopkins has more to gain by beating Jones if they fought again because it would even the score between them. A loss by Jones wouldn't really hurt him because everyone knows his skills have

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diminished. On the other hand a win by Jones would probably be enough of a tie-breaker that may induce some historians to rate him the greater fighter of the two.

The talk of a Hopkins-Jones rematch is being kicked around because neither fighter has many options. And regardless of what anyone says they both can still fight at a very high level. One gets the feeling listening to them talk that Jones has less trepidation about making the fight than does Hopkins, the reason being Hopkins and Jones know styles and know who they do and don't match up with.

Roy knows he's vulnerable to a fighter who's a big puncher and lets his hands go. He knows better than anyone that Hopkins only fights in spurts and isn't nearly a big enough puncher to worry him. Hopkins knows the one thing that has troubled him at times during his career is speed. No, Jones isn't as fast as he once was but then again neither Hopkins. Bernard also knows he won't get many great shots at Jones. Add to that he doesn't have the power to turn the fight with one punch, it's a fight he'd rather not make unless the money is so great he just can't walk away from it.

During the discussion on the radio show Jones said he would be willing to do a purse split of 60% to the winner and 40% to the loser, and Hopkins said no. Then someone from the Calvin Murphy show injected that it be a winner take all, Jones said that's more in my favor and Bernard hung up. Jones reiterated many times during the radio show that Hopkins doesn't want any part of him. That may be true, but it's not because Jones is back to being anywhere close to the fighter he was circa 2002/2003. Hopkins hung up because he's now about getting as much money as he can or improving his legacy. Hopkins wouldn't fight former middleweight champ Rodrigo Valdez who is 63 years old now in a winner take all bout. So forget about him fighting Jones, who is a matchup problem for him unless it's for the kind of money that if he jumped off of it while it was piled up, he'd break his leg.

Last year Hopkins and Jones both fought and lost to Joe Calzaghe, a fighter whom both would've beat by decision prime versus prime. However, in 2008 I thought Hopkins made Calzaghe look like a sloppy amateur and scored the fight a draw. Seven months later Calzaghe gave Jones the worse beating of his career. Against a common opponent I'd feel safer betting on Hopkins to win than I would Jones. But head-to-head Jones has the style advantage and Hopkins knows it. In the main Jones would force Hopkins to lead and pursue the entire fight. At one time Hopkins was extremely versatile and could fight as the attacker or the counter-puncher, but that's no longer the case. Roy would force Bernard to use up half the round just to get off a few shots that Jones would counter with his faster hands from his natural style and positioning. This pattern that would probably carry him to a decision victory.

If Hopkins is leery about fighting Jones again it's all about fighting styles and money, not because Jones is almost back to what he once was. Actually, Roy is still shattered mentally from getting knocked out by Antonio Tarver and Glen Johnson. Put him in with a fighter who can punch and Jones will fight not to get knocked out again just as he did versus Tarver in their rubber match.

That said, I'd be shocked if Hopkins agreed to fight Jones again.

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