

Can Usung JT Usurp King Arthur's Crown?

Written by Phil Woolever

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UPSET CITY - On paper, heading into the upcoming Showtime super-middleweight tournament, former 160-pound champion "King" Arthur Abraham, 30-0 (24), has to be considered one of the favorites to progress into the finals set for 2010.

As the fighter in the tourney with the most recent losses, the only fighter to be knocked out, and the man with the most losses overall, Jermain Taylor, 28-3-1, is considered by many observers to be the weakest link of the Super Six World Boxing Classic bunch.

Don't be surprised if Taylor doesn't get the message and sets the series on it's ear October 17th at the O2 World arena in Berlin.

Granted, Taylor should logically be at least a 2-1 underdog based on recent form, and he isn't the type of bet you should rush to make by any means.

Still, something about the situation indicates Arthur's applecart is ripe for the tipping.

Maybe it was the day and night publicity photos that showed a grinning Arthur standing outside the gigantic, still brand new looking structure with a grin on his mug as if he'd already sent Taylor packing back to the States.

"I can't wait to fight Taylor," said Arthur at a press conference in his adopted hometown that seemed more like a premature coronation, "I have always wanted to fight here in front of a sold out crowd."

Maybe it was the statement from O2 Managing Director Detlef Kornett that sounded like the record book page had already been written, "This will mark the beginning of many big fights with King Arthur at O2 World."

Mostly though, it was a night in February 2005 and another in November '08.

The first took place at Staples Center in LA, when Taylor stopped Daniel Edouard in three rounds, providing clues that he was fully capable of going on to defeat Bernard Hopkins, as Taylor did later that year, the first of two disputed but undeniably impressive victories.

The second potentially indicative evening took place in Bamberg, Germany when Arthur stopped Raul Marquez after six sloppy but hard fought sessions.

Taylor has never since looked as good as he did against Edouard, since becoming a champion Arthur has never looked as vulnerable as he did in the opening moments against Marquez.

Maybe neither man will ever look that way again, but either return to such form is far from impossible.

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For Taylor, win is a three letter word, spelled j-a-b.

When Taylor stopped a much fresher Marquez in June of '04, each man employed much the same jabbing tactics but Taylor looked light years quicker and stronger.

Listed at 5'11 with a 74 inch reach, Taylor actually has only around an inch or so more height and a couple inch reach advantage, but even in recent losses to Kelly Pavlik and Carl Froch he has shown superior hand speed than Abraham.

Taylor remains a relative long shot to be in one of the corners when the bell rings for the contest to determine the tournament winner, but by no means does that he won't pull a surprise along the way.

The man from Little Rock who would be "king" only has to turn back the clock a few years and stick stick stick for 36 minutes or less.

Admittedly that's much easier said than done, but if Taylor can use his longer, stronger jab for an entire fight and stay out of Abraham's way in the manner Marquez managed for just a few frames, Taylor could disappoint what looks to be a packed O2 arena of German fans in Berlin.

With tickets starting at only around twenty American bucks, the sellout with over 15,000 Abraham fans is very likely.

Not so an already too taken for granted outcome.

Arthur may very well find out that in this scenario, the first cut is the deepest indeed.