

Toney Over Either Klitschko, Can You Say Pipe-Dream?

Written by Frank Lotierzo
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While sitting ringside as an interested observer at the Vitali Klitschko versus Cris Arreola WBC heavyweight title bout last month, one James Toney was not impressed with Klitschko's 10th round stoppage victory. Toney implied that Klitschko was scared to death of Arreola and that's why he fought the way he did, which Toney saw as Vitali doing nothing more than just hitting and running, not boxing.

Hearing James Toney's remarks and comments regarding how badly he wants to fight either one of the Klitschko brothers for a piece of the heavyweight title is great copy; however, James makes a very compelling but nevertheless unrealistic case on his behalf. That's right, Toney would lose a one-sided fight to both Vitali and Wladimir Klitschko if he ever fought them. It's doubtful he'd be embarrassed or get knocked out, but he's nowhere nearly equipped enough physically to trouble them either.

Before anyone goes crazy and thinks I'm disrespecting James Toney, I'm not. Toney is/was a great fighter. He could go back and fight in any era and not only be competitive but would be a threat to win the title. All one has to do is look at his record 72-6-3 (44) and the level of opposition he's fought and it's easy to see that Toney is a throwback fighter. James is a great boxer/counter-puncher, has quick hands, knows when to throw what punch and is great at pacing himself and picking his spots.

Having said that, he doesn't have tool-one to beat either Vitali or Wladimir Klitschko with. It's a fantasy for anyone to believe that either Klitschko brother fears fighting him because it's too risky. The more realistic reason is there's no money in it for them and beating an undisciplined super middleweight does nothing for them or their career legacy wise.

If Toney were a decent sized heavyweight with legitimate power, it would be a different story, but he's not. Toney is slightly over 5'9" and his arm length and reach rivals that of a big alligator. James no doubt has the brains and boxing aptitude to take down either Vitali or Wladimir, but his physical limitations would prevent him from being competitive with them... unless going the distance and losing a lopsided decision constitutes competitive?

As vastly skilled as Toney is, he lacks two major assets needed to beat either brother. He doesn't have the physical stature and reach nor does he have anywhere near the power needed to shake Vitali or Wladimir. To beat either one of the Klitschkos it'll take a fighter who is close to their size along with having the know how to somewhat offset and neutralize their physical advantages. He'll need the kind of power that can disrupt them both physically and mentally along with the chin and toughness to hold up under the barrage of the two-handed power they'll unleash on him. Toney may possess the chin but that's about it.

Many fighters talk about having a plan when they enter the ring to fight both Vitali and Wladimir, and insist they'll implement it on fight night. Then on fight night after sampling their power in trying to get to them, they suddenly have a change of heart and look for another way, which

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doesn't exist. As for Toney, there's no question that he wouldn't come undone after getting nailed a few times by either of them nor would his confidence be immediately shook. No, his problem would be the fact that as long as he's at the end of their punches he can't do anything to them, let alone score.

If you're James Toney how do you fight either brother? Obviously Toney isn't going to fight as the aggressor and carry the fight to them. It's not his style to come in like say Joe Frazier and force the fight on the inside. Toney would set himself up perfectly for the big right hands that both brothers throw if he forces it. And for argument's sake even if he could get inside, he lacks the power it would require to take command of the fight and force either brother to fight with a sense of desperation or urgency. So forget about Toney trying to force the issue and turning the bout into a fire-fight.

The reality is Toney has only one choice in how to fight Vitali or Wladimir, and that's trying to box and counter-punch them. Meaning he'll have to move away and try to counter a fighter who only has to inch towards him behind a left jab thrown to the chin, chest or shoulder. All either brother would have to do is jab to the center of Toney's body and there's not a thing he could do because he'd be out of punching range. Just by jabbing him alone Vitali/Wladimir would never have to throw their right hand or left-hook. And that's because not only would Toney be too far away from them to try and counter, but without them throwing any finishing punches the openings he'd get to counter them would lessen. Without Vitali/Wladimir over extending or reaching for him the counter from a short armed fighter simply doesn't exist.

Toney barely held his own with Samuel Peter. And Peter brings nothing to the fight but strength and power. He can't box a lick, he's slow and can't put more than two punches together at a time. On top of that he can only fight as the attacker. In all honesty Samuel Peter is one of the most crude and limited fighters to win a piece of the title in quite some time. Yet his size and caveman skill-set enabled him to get by James Toney.

The bottom line is James Toney, as great as he is, just doesn't have anything in his physical arsenal to beat either Vitali or Wladimir Klitschko. He's too small to out box or fight them, and therefore his boxing scholars' IQ would never be a factor in the fight. It's highly unlikely Toney would be humiliated or embarrassed, but it's a fantasy to think he could win.

A more likely scenario would be once Toney realized he couldn't win, he'd make it an ugly fight and just try to make Vitali or Wladimir look bad.

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