

## Hopkins Comes Full Circle And Gives Back

Written by Frank Lotierzo

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Bernard Hopkins is one of the most complex and interesting fighters/athletes that you'll ever be exposed to. He's polite but isn't above putting a writer or promoter in their place if he senses they aren't sure of what they're saying or talking about. He's tolerant of fans who don't understand the inner workings of boxing but not writers or people who are supposed to know the business.

Recently it was announced that the Hopkins 49-5 (32) will fight Enrique Ornelas 29-5 (19) at the Liacouras Center in his home town of Philadelphia on December 2nd. Last month Hopkins signed an agreement to meet fellow future hall-of-famer Roy Jones in a rematch early next year presuming Roy beats cruiserweight Danny Green in Australia on the same night Hopkins fights Ornelas.

The Hopkins-Jones rematch has been 16 years in the making for the 40 year old Jones and soon-to-be 45 Hopkins. Frankly, I'm a little surprised that Bernard has agreed to fight Jones again due to the potential style problems that Roy's capable of presenting him. That aside Hopkins is the more complete fighter and better technician. And the fact that he's so willing to make the fight become a reality is enough to scare me away from picking against him.

Earlier in the week, Hopkins was asked about being one month shy of turning 45 when he fights Enrique Ornelas.

"I think the 45 stands out for people because the average 45-year-old person, they're not boxing, and they know how they feel, and most of the time it's not good. I know a lot of people in the media are trying to figure out 'When is this guy's going to look like he's 45?' Do I feel the same way as I did at 24 or 34? No. I've got some kinks here and there."

According to Hopkins, he has the body of and fights like a fighter 10 years younger than his birth certificate indicates, something he attributes to taking care of himself in and out of the ring.

"I didn't let the street and outside life destroy me," he said. "I took care of myself in my twenties. I took care of myself in my thirties. Now I'm getting back the dividends."

Yes, he's getting dividends back and his record clearly indicates that. However, what his record doesn't indicate is how little punishment he's endured since turning pro in 1989. Of all the accolades Hopkins has been showered with over the years, the one aspect of his career that isn't highlighted enough is his terrific defense and how difficult he is to hit cleanly.

Something else that's not mentioned enough about Hopkins is what a terrific Ambassador he is for professional boxing. Bernard has been active in the City of Philadelphia and is willing to give his time and money to causes that he believes in. Hopkins is also a Philadelphia Sixers fan and it's well known that he's very approachable while at the games and is more than willing to sign something or take a picture with whomever wants one.

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Hopkins hasn't fought in Philly since he beat a journeyman named Morrade Hokkar back in March of 2003 at the Spectrum. The fight with Hakkar was his second bout after he took apart Felix Trinidad at Madison Square Garden in September of 2001. The win over Trinidad took Hopkins to another level as a fighter and the Hakkar fight was his way of giving back to the city of Philadelphia.

No doubt the upcoming fight with Ornelas will be the last time for Philly to see Hopkins fight live and in person. More than that it will benefit three charities: The Make-A-Wish Foundation of Philadelphia & Susquehanna Valley; the Hero Thrill Show; and the National Breast Cancer Foundation Inc., in memory of Bernard's deceased mother, Shirley.

Hopkins is celebrated in the city Philadelphia and said, "It's crazy that the city is proud of me for accomplishing the things that I have. Philadelphia has lost 15 police officers in less than two years, but there will be a lot of [policemen] supporting me at the Liacouras Center."

In 1988, after serving 56 months of an 18 year sentence for being convicted of strong-arm robbery, 22-year-old Bernard Hopkins was released from Graterford Prison.

Bernard has come full circle since then.

And if he beats Enrique Ornelas we'll hear from him again before he fights Roy Jones early next year.

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