

Hopkins Continues To Win At The Game Of Boxing

Written by Frank Lotierzo

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In his fight with Enrique Ornelas Wednesday night, Bernard Hopkins confirmed once again that, at almost 45 years old, there's still a lot of fight left in him. No, Hopkins didn't look like a world beater and if you had never see him fight before you wouldn't have been overwhelmed by his showing. But that's not who Hopkins is. He never overwhelmed his opponents with Sugar Ray Leonard or Roy Jones type flash and physical brilliance nor is/was he a life-taker on the level of Thomas Hearns.

Bernard is a tough technician and a masterful counter-puncher. He first takes the bullets out of his opponents' guns and then dismantles them. And that's exactly what he did to Ornelas starting after the fourth round. From the fifth round on through to the conclusion of the twelfth Hopkins showed Ornelas something a little different each round. Just when Enrique thought Hopkins was in counter-punch mode, Bernard pressed him. When Ornelas thought he was fighting Hopkins the attacker, Bernard fought him on the inside and made good use of his shoulders and head.

No doubt Ornelas is hurting and feels physically like he was mugged by three or four guys. Bernard broke out all the tricks against Ornelas. Resting his head on the inside and tying his opponent up and hitting him with his free hand. The short double-counter rights on the inside mixed in with some lead left uppercuts and hooks, punches Hopkins seldom throws. During the course of the twelve rounds they fought, Hopkins displayed remarkable versatility and there wasn't anything Ornelas could do about it.

Hopkins clearly won the fight and controlled the action most of the way. But Ornelas did have his moments and did get through to Hopkin's chin a few times but really wasn't much more than competitive for the first half of the fight.

The Ornelas fight was the best thing in the world for a 44 year old fighter--12 rounds of good, solid work without having to risk too much, but against a guy who can win a few rounds from him. Hopkins is outsmarting all of us. However, the fight with Ornelas was supposed to be a tune-up and the start of his preparation for his proposed rematch with Roy Jones which was slated for March of 2010. But that came crashing down when Roy was stopped in the first round by cruiserweight Danny Green earlier in the day in Australia.

Jones wasn't even hit that hard and clearly has no punch resistance. Bernard can say all he wants that because Roy wasn't counted out or flat on his back when the fight ended that a fight between the two of them is still viable. The fact is nobody would pay to see Jones fight again regardless of who the opponent is. Hopkins held up his end of the deal and cannot do anything about Jones getting stopped and blowing any chance they had of meeting again 17 years after Jones won a decision over him when they fought in May of 1993.

So what now for Hopkins who is clearly not ready to retire and can still fight at the highest level in professional boxing? With Hopkins it's much more than finding an opponent who can make

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for a good fight. Hopkins is looking for legacy or break the bank fights only at this time. Someone wrote after Danny Green stopped Roy Jones that perhaps Green would be an attractive opponent for Hopkins, which is a joke.

Green is a big and strong cruiserweight who fights aggressively and can punch pretty good. Not only is he a tough stylistic match up for Hopkins, beating him doesn't really enhance his legacy. So we can forget about Hopkins fighting Danny Green unless it's for a ton of money and the odds of that are minuscule at best.

After the fight Hopkins said he'll be the heavyweight champ in 2010. Which is his way of conveying to the boxing public that he's looking to make a fight with WBA heavyweight champ David Haye. And that would be an intriguing fight. Hopkins would be fighting the smallest heavyweight in boxing who holds a major title. In addition to that, Hopkins is a much more experienced and better fighter than Haye. The question for Bernard is can he handle a 6'3" 215 pound younger fighter the caliber of David Haye? And that alone would be the intrigue of the fight.

Haye-Hopkins makes perfect sense for Bernard. It's doubtful that Hopkins would be hurt or embarrassed if he lost. And it's not like Hopkins's legacy would take any hit at all fighting Haye. He's basically playing with house money and would be an underdog in the fight. With that, Hopkins' legacy would be greatly enhanced if he were somehow able to beat David Haye after turning 45 years old.

In all likelihood Hopkins and Golden Boy Promotions will try to bring Hopkins and Haye together. And if that fight cannot be made then perhaps Hopkins will look to fight Chad Dawson which is another fight in which there's no downside for Hopkins not to mention the upside is monumental. That said, Dawson is a risky fight for Hopkins and I think he'll go in another direction if he can make another fight with the risk-reward tilting in his favor.

Hopkins has positioned himself great and is now at the point where he can choose whatever fight he thinks serves his career best. Regardless of who Bernard Hopkins fights next, he's assured himself that he'll retire with his health, wealth and legacy intact and will be remembered as the greatest fighter in boxing history who fought beyond their 40th birthday.

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