

Calzaghe Flirting With Name Being Removed From Esteemed List

Written by Frank Lotierzo
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Its recently been reported via a few newspaper and online publications that undefeated former super-middleweight champ Joe Calzaghe 46-0 (32) is contemplating coming out of retirement. Calzaghe last fought eighteen months ago (November of 2008) when he administered Roy Jones the worst beating of his career, after being dropped in the first round by a Jones right hand. Calzaghe retired shortly after being awarded a 12-round unanimous decision over Jones, which was coming on the heels of him beating another legend, Bernard Hopkins, in his previous fight by a split decision verdict. Now theres talk of Golden Boys Richard Schaefer traveling to Britain in early June and discussing a possible rematch with Hopkins, purportedly to take place in Wales.

In case you missed it, Hopkins and Schaefer are back on terms after a brief falling out over some things said by Schaefer about Hopkins in the aftermath of his last fight with Roy Jones that didnt set well with Bernard. Obviously, Hopkins isnt done fighting and will continue to as long as he can make a nice payday and isnt hurt physically along the way. Hopkins is no longer capable of dissecting and taking world class fighters apart. But he is still one of the best in the sport as far at protecting himself, and the next time he endures any punishment in the ring itll be the first.

A rematch with Calzaghe, although its not at the top of his fight wish list, makes perfect sense for Hopkins. Bernard hasnt been out of shape since he turned pro, 20-plus years ago, and with the exception of his rematch with Jermain Taylor, hes always been better the second time he sees an opponent. It would also provide Hopkins the opportunity to avenge his extremely close defeat to Calzaghe, along with a chance to become the first fighter to beat him, which would no doubt add to his legacy at age 45. Oh, and Calzaghe isnt nearly enough of a puncher to hurt Hopkins, lessening the risk that hell even get marked, let alone hurt.

Joe Calzaghe retired from boxing at the ideal time, which is almost as unique as retiring undefeated for a fighter. He left having defeated two, albeit past their prime legends, in his last two bouts. He was undefeated and had his health, wealth and legacy intact when he hung up the gloves for good. The biggest mistake he could make now is coming out of retirement. Joe may have retired undefeated, but the caliber of opposition he faced circa 1993-2008 isnt overwhelming and a loss in his last fight will be something his critics will remember for years to come. Especially if he looks bad and doesnt compete for a majority of the bout.

Why fight Hopkins and risk losing to a 45-year old fighter who was underwhelming in his last fight? In addition to that, Joes admitted to breaking every training rule in the book since he last fought. Hes spent his fair share of time with women and cocaine while consuming more than the legal limit of alcohol. Not exactly the life-style a fighter would indulge in to prepare for even a 45-year old Hopkins.

Obviously Calzaghe will make a ton of money if he returns to the ring and fights in Wales, regardless of who he fights. But instead of putting his undefeated record on the line against a

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fighter seven years his senior, he should fight the winner of the Showtime Super-six tournament if he does return to the ring. At this time it looks as if itll be the currently undefeated Andre Ward. The risk-reward for Calzaghe taking on the Super-six survivor weigh much better in his favor. If Calzaghe comes back at age 38 and wins, his legacy will grow by leaps and bounds, and if he loses it wont be so bad and at least he can say he was beaten by the best when he was well past his prime. On the other hand, if he beats Hopkins, so what, hes already done that. And if he loses to him, he lost to an older fighter who stunk the place out in his last fight.

Theres nothing better in professional boxing then when a respected champion gets out at the right time. Former heavyweight champ Smokin Joe Frazier has said repeatedly that boxing is the only sport where you can get your brains shook, your money took, and your name in the undertakers book. Truer words have never been spoken by any fighter. Calzaghe retired without ever taking a single beating, and by all accounts retained his money and health. That said, it appears that Joes like many other champions who tried to fight the boxing addiction during their retirement. During his hiatus from the ring he apparently hasnt found anything meaningful to do that stimulates him mentally or physically. For awhile his name was on that short list of fighters who got out at the perfect time and made the sport serve them instead of the opposite.

Most likely Calzaghe will succumb to Richard Schaefers call and fight Hopkins or the Super-six survivor. And after that fight is over, would anyone be willing to bet his name still remains on the list of fighters who retired at the perfect time and never came back, a list made up of none other than Gene Tunney, Rocky Marciano, Carlos Monzon, Ricardo Lopez and Lennox Lewis?

Tunney, Marciano, Monzon, Lopez and Lewis left boxing as champion having won their last fight against a formidable challenger, and managed to resist the temptation of the big money they were offered to come back. When Calzaghe retired it wouldve been reasonable to include his name on that esteemed list, something that will be off the table by this time next year if he returns to the ring.

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