

Journey Of James Toney Pt. 3 ? Only Randy Couture Steps Up

Written by David A. Avila

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Boxing promoter Dan Goossen, who has worked with James "Lights Out Toney for a decade, thinks it's only fair that no matter the outcome with Randy "The Natural Couture, a rematch in a boxing ring is not much to ask.

Silence is mostly what he Goossen is getting in return.

Nonetheless, 10-time boxing world champion Toney (72-6-3, 44 KOs) will put on the four-ounce gloves and step inside the Octagon against grappler extraordinaire Couture (18-10) on Saturday in Boson. The boxer versus mixed martial arts fighter match UFC 118 will be shown on pay-per-view television.

Ultimate Fighting Championship boss Dana White hedged his bet by putting on Frankie Edgar defending the UFC lightweight title in a rematch with former champ BJ Penn. And of course there will be other good match ups too.

But Toney's irascible personality and stone cold confidence has not only turned heads in the last few days but boosted interest with sports handicappers. A lot of late money has been showing up in the casinos for the boxer.

"I'm cocky, I'm brashful, I'm braggadocious, ain't nobody like me so they boo me. But you know what, you can't beat me, this ain't nothing new to me, says Toney.

Maybe it's the boxing fans suddenly rushing the betting windows or maybe the realization that Couture is 47 has changed outlooks. The once 7 -1 odds against Toney are slimming down.

For those old enough to remember when Muhammad Ali stepped into the ring with former Japanese wrestling star Antonio Inoki it became a war that nobody expected. Today, the world is aware that grapplers have a distinct advantage but they can still be hit.

Ali and Inoki ended in a draw but the boxer suffered serious leg injuries from 15 rounds of kicks. Toney does not move around the ring like Ali did, but he also knows how to fight inside. Will it help against Couture?

"Let's see James do what he do best and that's hit, said Toney, who is known in the boxing circles for his pinpoint accuracy. "You know like I said, I'm not worried about whatever Randy going to do. Randy's going to be Randy, James will be James, you know what I'm saying?

Couture does not fare well against strong punchers who favor the stand up game. Chuck Liddell proved that in their last two fights winning by knockout. The second loss shoved Couture into retirement but he returned and captured the heavyweight title.

Still, once the chin goes it's difficult to get it back. Couture may not be able to sustain a punch

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from Toney who is more accurate and quicker than Liddell. One thing Liddell did pack is serious firepower. Toney's firepower is still a question mark with the four-ounce gloves.

One more thing, Toney has never been knocked out.

"The question is what other skill sets and what other things is James going to be able to learn and try to execute in this fight, said Couture with his ever present analytical mindset. "And that's going to determine how much it's just boxing versus MMA...so you know it will be interesting to see what other things James develops specifically for this fight.

Since the beginning of the decade Toney's fought much bigger foes in the boxing ring where his lack of size always kept fans from gathering behind him. But time after time he would show how a little man can beat a bigger man and often with shocking results.

In boxing both Wladimir and Vitali Klitschko refused to fight him. Both have opted to fight relative neophytes of the boxing game than tangle with Toney.

Last year, when Vitali Klitschko beat Chris Arreola in Los Angeles, there was Toney looking at the current WBC titleholder. Klitschko told Toney that he heard he was supposed to be afraid of him according to rumors.

"What are you going to do about it? shot back Toney.

Both Klitschko brothers walked away.

"I was supposed to fight them back in 2002. We were going to meet in Las Vegas but they didn't show up, said Toney. "I'm going to get those Klitschko sisters after I knock out Randy Couture.

It's with this in mind that Toney enters the Octagon on Saturday. He knows that more than winning a fight is at stake against Couture who he respects immensely for giving him the opportunity to show his skills on the national scene.

"I can't wait, says Toney who's excited as a kid in Disneyland for the first time. "Four-ounce gloves.

Couture said he recognizes that he and Toney have spent most of their life in their respective sports. Now it's time to see who can dictate to whom.

"I have no illusions that I'm a world class boxer or that I'm going to stand and trade with James. That would be pretty stupid, said Couture while on the telephone conference call. "Given the rules of engagement of mixed martial arts I can tie him up, I can take him down and put him on the ground and do a lot of other things to kind of neutralize his strength which is his striking, most definitely.

Boxer or wrestler, it's going to be an intriguing night on Saturday.