

Jermain Taylor Won And Lost With Class

Written by Frank Lotierzo

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Jermain Taylor is one of the better people you'll meet among the professional boxing landscape. When he ended Bernard Hopkin's ten-year run as middleweight champ I was very critical of the decision in the immediate aftermath. And that's because I thought Hopkins pulled the fight out down the stretch and my displeasure was more aimed at Jermain's promoter Lou DiBella, who I have nothing against. It's just that I thought DiBella's connections had a lot to do with the decision.

It was never anything personal. And it's not like Jermain Taylor had anything to do with the decision. His gloved fists did the talking for him and they made their case rather well. Especially in the rematch with Hopkins when he ran away with the first five or six rounds and forced Hopkins to play catchup during the second half of the bout and came up short losing a unanimous decision as opposed to the split decision that went against him the first time they fought.

Since turning Hopkins back in their rematch, Taylor's suffered some setbacks in the ring but his will doesn't appear to have been broken. And that's after being stopped in a pretty devastating fashion in three of his last five bouts. Taylor's last setback occurred in his last fight a few months back in the 12th-round of his bout against the tough, strong and rugged Arthur Abraham in Showtime's Super-six Super Middleweight tournament. Jermain went to the hospital after the fight and remained in Germany for a week before flying back to the United States.

Yesterday Taylor 28-4-1 (17) announced that he will take some well needed and deserved time off and bypass his next scheduled bout on April 17th against Andre Ward in the next round of the Super-six tournament. And that's good news. Time off will be good for the 31 year old Taylor who has been boxing for the past 20 years. However, it wouldn't surprise me to find out that Jermain's decision not to fight in the near future is moreso because of the pressure he's under from those close to him and urging him to step away from the ring. Jermain is a fighter at heart and I'd bet inside he wants to go back to the gym and prepare for Andre Ward.

Jermain should take his time and not rush into any decision regarding his future as a professional fighter. The human body can only endure so much and once it's reached its point of break it never comes back. It's like a rubber band. It can only be stretched so far and once it snaps it can't be put back together or repaired.

Taylor is a nice looking, well spoken articulate guy. He can probably do whatever he wants with the rest of his life if he applies the same work-ethic and dedication he did into being a world class amateur and professional fighter. He had a very good career and has a lot of accomplishments to be proud of. And let no one forget - Jermain Taylor fought every good fighter of his era who came down the pike; and in some cases more than once whether he won or lost to them.

No, he didn't go undefeated and he shouldn't have, not when you consistently fight the level of

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opposition he did every time out. It just doesn't happen. I'm sure the first thing that'll jump out at some when they glance over his record are his four losses. But what those who don't know how to comprehend a fighters' record won't pick up or take with them is the names of the fighters on both sides of his resume. No Jermain Taylor wasn't a great fighter, but how many fighters are? If great fighters came a long so frequently than they wouldn't be so special would they?

As of this writing no one knows whether or not if we'll ever see Jermain Taylor in the ring again. But if by chance he makes what looks like it's the right decision and hangs'em up, I'll remember Jermain for the two signature fights of his career. That being he was the fighter who ended the longest title tenure in middleweight history on July 17, 2005 when he relieved Bernard Hopkins of his undisputed middleweight title. It's my belief that had Jermain Taylor not possessed the jab, speed and style to give Hopkins a fit for 24 rounds over the course of two fights, Hopkins still could possibly be the reigning middleweight champ. Surely Hopkin's body of work since losing the rematch to Taylor supports the case for that. Remember, Hopkins went 12 years in between fighting Roy Jones and Jermain Taylor without a defeat - and only Segundo Mercado hurt him during that period.

It's doubtful that Edison Miranda had the class or style to dethrone Hopkins. Arthur Abraham may have had the strength and toughness to perhaps have given Hopkins a long night, but lacks the class, style and skill to be thought of as the favorite. Arthur Abraham's only chance to beat Hopkins would've been by stoppage - and that's not a bet I'd take. As for the fighter who dethroned Taylor, Kelly Pavlik, we saw how easily Hopkins undressed him on his way to a lop-sided decision victory. And forget the weight Hopkins fought Pavlik at; Bernard has the chin, toughness and style to beat Pavlik every day of the week. Again, minus Jermain Taylor from the equation and Hopkins very well still might be the middleweight champ. It's not like he left the middleweight division because he was struggling to make weight. He moved up because it was proven that as long as Taylor was in the division Hopkins couldn't remain as the fighter to beat.

If this is it for Jermain Taylor, salute him for never ducking any fighters who were a perceived threat to him. And most importantly Jermain Taylor maintained his class and poise from start to finish whether he won or lost.

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