

Hopkins vs Jones II: Just How Stupid Do They Think We Are?

Written by Frank Lotierzo

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Part of the business of boxing is to try to sell dog food by telling us that it's filet mignon. They'll add that it's especially good because it's had the chance to age for so many years. Golden Boy Promotions, with a little assist from Square Ring, is about to try to feed you something totally inedible while promising it'll be a feast. Not since fat middle aged Mike Tyson roughhoused with an elaborately headgeared semi-retired journeyman named Corey Sanders have boxing fans been asked to pay so much for anything this ridiculous. P.T. Barnum said there's a sucker born every minute, and he was right. But even P.T. Barnum wouldn't have tried to get away with this one.

In May of 1993, Bernard Hopkins, then 22-1, fought Roy Jones, at the time 21-0, for the vacant IBF middleweight title. Going in, the fight was considered to be an interesting matchup, but nothing close to one of PPV proportions. Most knowledgeable boxing people thought that Jones, coming into his prime, would probably win it fairly easily. His style was all wrong for Bernard Hopkins, he was thought to be the more talented of the two, he was the bigger puncher, and HBO was behind him in a major way.

The fight played out without any drama, Jones winning a clear-cut decision in a decent, but by no means spectacular fight.

And now Hopkins and Jones want to try it again, seventeen years later. They're calling the promotion "The Rivals: Hopkins vs Jones II."

This nonsense is a rivalry? I don't think so. In boxing, a rivalry consists of a series of exciting, closely contested fights between near-equals. Hopkins and Jones staged one fight that was devoid of tension, with no knockdowns, no moments where the outcome was in doubt, and that came to an unambiguous conclusion. At the time, nobody was clambering for a rematch. Want a rivalry? Pay to watch Vazquez-Marquez IV.

Still, had Hopkins and Jones decided to do this ten years ago, I'd have endorsed it wholeheartedly. By 2000, you could have made the argument that they were the two best fighters in the game, and they deserved the big payday that a PPV fight would have brought them. I'd have still picked Jones by another clear-cut decision in another decent, but by no means spectacular fight, but I'd have paid to watch it.

Unfortunately, during the early to mid 2000's, they played patty cake over money, with Jones making Hopkins jump through hoops. In the end, Jones got too cute, and things fell through.

And then, starting about six years ago, Jones imploded. He got knocked out cold, got knocked out cold again, and started making a habit of losing. And he started making excuses for his defeats.

Meanwhile, Hopkins had solidly enhanced his reputation, going through a brief bad spell by first

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losing his title and then failing to regain it from Jermain Taylor, but suddenly hitting a post-forty hot streak that significantly enhanced his historical standing.

At this point, he started looking for where he could make the most money while incurring the least risk. Which, as it turned out, was exactly what Roy Jones had started doing, although from a weaker power position.

So the two old timers wound up back at the bargaining table, but this time the shoe was on the other foot in terms of who held the upper negotiating hand. They did manage to work things out, and it looked like the fight would be made.

Both guys took tuneups, but Jones didn't do his homework and was once again knocked out, this time in the first round. He should have looked at the YouTube footage of Danny Green sparring with James Toney a little more carefully.

At that point, the fight should have been dead. But it wasn't. Both guys have twisted themselves into pretzels trying to explain why the rematch still matters. But it doesn't matter, and you can't parse it any way that makes it worth our fifty bucks.

The only reason anyone would have for buying this fight would either be to see the final destruction of Roy Jones or because they think that, styles making fights, Roy's still all wrong for Bernard and can slip and slide and potshot his way to a decision.

The first scenario isn't going to happen. Bernard Hopkins isn't that kind of fighter. Jones is shot: his chin is gone, his legs are gone, his balls are gone, but Hopkins won't come roaring out of his corner to take Roy's head off. If he wins, he wins over the long, dull haul.

The second proposition, Jones using the ring to get a decision, is actually possible. Hopkins is forty-five. He's got to pace himself. His workrate isn't anything to brag about. If he loses, a lot of his reputation will unfairly be lost as well. But is it worth paying fifty dollars just to see that happen in a lousy fight? Gouge me for \$19.95 and I might think about it.

"As a fan, I am excited that the fight is finally happening and that we don't have to wait any longer to see this great rivalry continue," said Oscar de la Hoya, President of Golden Boy Promotions. If Oscar had waited much longer, he could have signed the fighters' grandchildren to appear on the undercard. I wouldn't be willing to pay fifty bucks for that either.

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