

Hopkins Could Lose More Than Bout Versus Jones

Written by Frank Lotierzo
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Bernard Hopkins is one of the most unique great fighters in the history of the modern era of the sweet science. Hopkins knows the business of boxing better than any fighter who has ever held a world title. Fighters like Sugar Ray Robinson and Muhammad Ali knew they were the draw and should get the lions share of the money. Floyd Mayweather understands the risk-reward factor and worked that angle to perfection throughout his career. But Hopkins' knowledge of how boxing is run and where the money comes from and how it's distributed surpasses any other fighter who has come along.

Bernard never had the boxing establishment behind him like the the fighters mentioned above, along with many others. Late in Robinson's career the establishment turned on him because he tried to bully them and hold them up for more money whenever he felt he had the leverage to do it. Towards the end of his career they did try and get Robinson knocked off and managed to hose him out of a few decisions while he was in his late thirties, (the third Fullmer fight is one example). Which is something Hopkins has had to contend with and battle since he became a serious contender for the middleweight title. And that's because he was outspoken about the misdeeds that many managers, promoters and television networks tried to pull over on a lot of professional fighters who weren't well represented.

Through it all Bernard Hopkins at age 45 has managed to make boxing work for him like few other fighters in history. He could take care of business at the highest level inside and out of the ring. And despite him not being a once in a generation physical talent or a life taking puncher, he held the middleweight title longer and made more defenses of it than any other fighter who's ever held it. And if he wasn't robbed in his first fight versus Jermain Taylor in 2005, Hopkins would still be the middleweight champ today and almost into the 15th year of his title tenure. The only two middleweight who would've presented him a challenge were Arthur Abraham and Kelly Pavlik. Hopkins dismantled Pavlik in 2008, and it had nothing to do with the weight they fought at, and I couldn't pick Abraham to beat Hopkins circa 2006-2010.

Obviously Hopkins hasn't made all the right decisions since his pro-debut and would admit so himself. But he's made a lot more right decisions than wrong ones - especially during the twilight of his career. And picking against Hopkins and questioning his decisions has shown to be a risky proposition. That said, his choice to fight Roy Jones 17 years after losing a unanimous decision to him doesn't seem to be one of his better decisions. But unlike anyone else, Hopkins has total control of his destiny as to how this one unfolds.

Hopkins and Jones are two of the greatest pound-for-pound fighters to come along during the last 20 years. Ten years ago Roy probably held the upper hand legacy wise because he was the more accomplished fighter and did win their only head to head confrontation. Then Roy began to get knocked out as Hopkins continued to progress while making successful defenses of the middleweight title. Once Roy could no longer count on his talent and physical brilliance to get by, he became more hittable and suffered a few devastating knockout defeats. Whereas Hopkins was blessed with a first tier chin, never has endured a terrible beating and learned how

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to pick his spots and protect himself once his skills began to erode fighting the best boxing had to offer well into his forties.

When Bernard and Roy met in 1993 their style clash didn't provide for a very compelling fight. Most observers acknowledged that Roy was further along and was the more developed fighter than Bernard at that stage of their careers. However, over the years Hopkins has shown that he's actually the greater and more technically sound and scientific fighter.

Since Jones defeated John Ruiz to capture a piece of the heavyweight title in 2003, he's gone 6-5 and has been stopped in three of his five losses. Hopkins has gone 9-3 over that same span of time. With the difference being Bernard hasn't been beat up or punched around in any of his three defeats. And in some circles he's viewed as having won at least two of the three decisions that went against him. He's also scored three of the more high profile and signature wins of his career since 2003 in beating Oscar De La Hoya, Antonio Tarver and Kelly Pavlik.

Roy Jones is a tough match up for Hopkins stylistically, always has been and always will be. Hopkins is vulnerable to quick handed fighters who force him to push the fight and initiate the action. Jones isn't as fast as he once was but he's still faster than Hopkins. At age 41 Jones is vulnerable to aggressive and take charge fighters who can punch. Hopkins isn't aggressive nor is he a big one punch banger. So in order for him to trouble Jones he'll have to come out of his role as the counter-puncher and fight as the aggressor. When is the last time Hopkins fought like that?

Then there's another issue Hopkins has to overcome - and that is Roy believes he has Bernard's number. And despite him not being able to cope with Danny Green in his last fight, he believes that he can't lose to Hopkins. Some fighters just have it in their head that a particular fighter can't beat them. Which is how Roy looks at Bernard. Like Evander Holyfield always knew that he could and would beat Mike Tyson if they ever fought, and Muhammad Ali just knew he could beat George Foreman, Jones believes implicitly that he can't lose to Bernard regardless of how far he's regressed as a fighter. Plus, he's already defeated Hopkins and the fight is a godsend to him at this time knowing at worst he'll retire having gone 1-1 versus Bernard.

For Hopkins, a loss to Jones at this point when Roy has looked so diminished and shot as a world class fighter would probably push him behind Jones as far as who'll be regarded as the greater fighter in the eyes of history. On top of that Bernard doesn't stand to make a lot of money since the fight is going to be a dog at the box office. Also, it's not out of the question that Hopkins can possibly finagle a fight with WBA heavyweight title holder David Haye in his final career bout if Haye beats John Ruiz on the same night Hopkins fights Jones. That'll be off the table if he loses to Jones on April 3rd.

It's become apparent that Hopkins needs to even the score with Jones before he leaves the ring for good. And Jones is more than willing to fight him again to solidify that he always was and still is the greater fighter between them. The fight makes all the sense in the world for Roy Jones. And beating Hopkins after his humiliating first round defeat at the hands of Danny Green will help restore some of the glow that was attached to his overall career accomplishments which have been dulled over the last five to seven years.

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On the other hand Hopkins is almost in a no win situation. If he wins but struggles, he loses, if he blows Roy out in the first round, he's accomplished the same thing Danny Green did fighting Jones four months ago. And if he loses it'll be harder to rank him above Roy in the pantheon of all-time greats when it was he who was considered the fresher fighter with more left when they met at the end of their hall of fame careers.

If Hopkins were making a ton of money the risk in this fight and all there is to lose would be worth it, but that's not the case in regards to his upcoming rematch with Roy Jones. As a risk/reward fight it's stupid. If someone paid him \$10,000.000, it'd make sense.

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