

## Where Does Roy Jones Rank

Written by Frank Lotierzo

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Now that Roy Jones has regained his light heavyweight title belts, where does he go? In defeating Antonio Tarver, he beat the top light heavyweight in the world, after him. And yes, Jones did deserve the decision over Tarver. He didn't take Tarver apart, but he showed he's more of a champion than Tarver. When the fight was on the line, Jones did what all-time greats do. He sucked it up in the last two rounds, and clearly won them. By Jones winning the last two rounds, it made the fight 115-113 Jones, or 7-5 in rounds.

I thought Jones was a little weakened by the weight loss, but Tarver's style caused more problems than the weight loss did. When Tarver looks at the tape of the fight, he'll realize that he let the fight slip away. He had Jones on a night he could've been defeated, yet he was happy just showing he could fight him on equal terms. I'm sorry, Tarver didn't do enough in some of the crucial rounds to be awarded them. In my book, you must let your hands go, especially in a close fight. Jones did, Tarver didn't. End of story, although it wasn't spectacular, Jones won the fight.

Other than Jones, not one current light heavyweight contender will be remembered down the road. If you doubt this, than just go back and look how ordinary the rest of them look when they face each other and not Jones. Tarver may have put up a good fight, but he didn't distinguish himself as anything special too me. He is not a light heavyweight fighter I'll remember when discussing outstanding light heavyweights of the past in a couple years. That's outstanding, not great light heavies from the past.

No one can say with a straight face that the Tarver-Griffin or Tarver-Harding bouts resembled anything close to being contested between two outstanding fighters. This weekend we saw Clinton Woods fight Glen Coffe Johnson to a draw in a bout that was basically an elimination for the Jones-Tarver winner. In my opinion, that fight represents the current mediocrity in the light heavyweight division. I know Bob Foster's era was thin, but this generation of light heavies is every bit as inept!

It is now time for Roy Jones to take that monumental leap to the heavyweight division against an upper tier opponent or retire. No more John Ruiz's and heavyweights of that ilk. Jones is in a very unique position, he can't lose either way. If he challenges either a Tyson, Lewis, or Klitschko, no one can say he's picking his spots. Jones has been accused of selecting his opponents, the way most people go to a restaurant and chose from the menu. You chose what you like and what appeals to you.

By Jones fighting Lewis, Tyson, or Vitali Klitschko, he puts himself in a position that only has an upside and no downside. If he loses, he's supposed to and it doesn't hurt him. If he beats them, his perception and status skyrocket out of this world. Realistically, these are the only type fights that Jones should be taking if he continues to fight. Not only can a fight against a top heavyweight enhance his reputation, it can also provide him with the outrageous pay day that he has long clamored for.

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At this time, Roy Jones is a hard fighter to place in an historical perspective. On one hand you can make a case that he may be in the same class as Sugar Ray Robinson, just at the back of it. Although I think Robinson was clearly the better and more skilled fighter, Jones' accomplishments are very compelling and hard to deny. Jones' has clearly been the best fighter from 160-175 since turning pro in 1989. He holds convincing wins over two fighters who are definite Hall-Of-Famers who will be remembered as all-time greats in Bernard Hopkins and James Toney.

In those fights he was totally in control, and at the worst lost only four rounds to Hopkins. In Jones' fight versus James Toney at 168, Jones won going away. After running out of worthy challengers in the light heavyweight division, Jones moved up and won a lopsided decision over John Ruiz to capture the WBA heavyweight title. The most impressive thing about those fights is that the outcome during any of them was never in question. He basically jogged to victory.

The other side of the Roy Jones equation is that he's never beaten a fighter who was perceived to be great the night he fought them. When Jones fought Bernard Hopkins, Hopkins wasn't nearly the blossomed fighter that he would eventually turn out to be. I don't care what his fight total was when they fought, Jones didn't fight the best Hopkins.

When Jones fought James Toney, Toney was considered one of the top pound-for-pound fighters in the world. However, when Jones and Toney fought, Toney was having all kind of personal problems and had to lose almost 20 pounds the week of the fight. We saw the effect going from 193 to 175 in a few months had on Jones. It wasn't Jones' fault, but the bottom line is Toney wasn't at his best, and that was noticeable before the first bell. In the Toney fight, Jones' did what he should've done against a poorly prepared Toney, he won easy.

After unifying and defending the light heavyweight title for six plus years, Jones moved up to fight heavyweight. In his only foray as a heavyweight, Jones won the WBA title from John Ruiz. Yes, Jones deserves all due praise for fighting and defeating a title holder who out weighed him by 27 pounds. However, let's not lose sight of the fact that when Jones fought Ruiz, despite holding a title, Ruiz was about the 8th or 9th best heavyweight in the world. And it can't be overlooked that Ruiz was no threat as a puncher and was considered to be the perfect choice for Jones to fight. In fact Jones was a 2-1 favorite by the time the fight finally came off. I can't help but think that many past light heavyweight champs could have held a piece of the heavyweight title had they fought John Ruiz in order to capture it.

The way I see it, there can be a case suggesting Jones as an all-time great, easily. And it can also be argued that he is a great fighter who has been aided by the fact that over the last 15 or so years, the title challengers from 160-175 have been a very limited group. I don't know which side I come down on yet.

The thing that keeps me from going off the deep end praising Jones is, I keep thinking, what would Ketchel, Greb, Monzon, and Hagler do with Sugar Boy Malinga, Fermin Chirino, and Danny Garcia as middleweights? What would Billy Conn, Archie Moore, Bob Foster, Michael Spinks, and Dwight Muhammad Qawi do with Montell Griffin, Otis Grant, Lou DeValle, Rick Frazier, Eric Harmon, Glen Kelly, Clinton Woods, and Antonio Tarver at light heavyweight? And

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lastly, how would Conn, Moore, Foster, and Spinks have fared had they fought Ruiz the night Jones did for the WBA heavyweight title? I happen to believe that the fighters I named would have taken apart the opponents that Jones fought from Middleweight to Heavyweight every bit as convincingly as he did.

I know that hypothetical fights are only conjecture, but I have no doubt that Marvin Hagler would've gone through every middleweight Jones fought the night he fought them. And yes that includes the pre-prime Hopkins who Jones beat for the vacant middleweight title. I also believe that Michael Spinks would've destroyed every light heavyweight Jones fought the night he fought them. And obviously I have absolutely no doubt that Spinks would've beaten Ruiz the night Jones took his WBA heavyweight title.

Since I believe those past greats would have handled those fighters as handily as Jones, it's hard for me to rank him above them. I can rank him with them at this time, but I'll wait until his body of work is complete before passing final judgement. That's as fair as I can be.