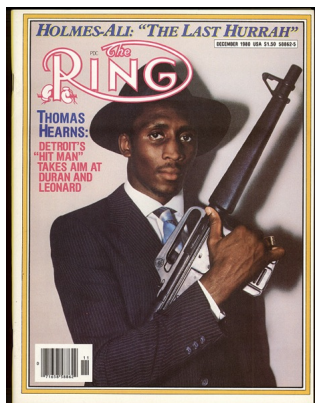


Thomas Hearns Would Be A Star Of Incredible Magnitude Today

Written by Frank Lotierzo

Friday, 18 October 2013 09:32



He was about a half inch shorter than former undisputed light heavyweight champion Michael Spinks and possessed the same 78 inch reach, yet he was a welterweight who never had to kill himself to get down to 147. His left jab was straight, fast, accurate and not only set up his finishing punches, it also kept his opponents on their heels and made it suicide for them to try and take the fight to him. His left hook to the body was debilitating and his right hand only had to land once for him to turn out the lights for fighters who fought between 147/175. In fact, many of Hearns' foes fell face forward after being hit by his right hand because they were out.

His name is Thomas "The Hitman" Hearns, and he won legitimate championships/titles from welterweight up to light heavyweight. In a career that spanned over a quarter century, Hearns fought the biggest names and best fighters around who either fought for or won a piece of the welterweight, junior middleweight, middleweight, super-middleweight and light heavyweight titles. Hearns scored 48 knockouts in 61 career victories and lost five times in 67 fights. As a welterweight he was 32-1 with 30 KO's, a 91% knockout ratio.

Thomas Hearns turns 55 today. He's one of the most iconic fighters to emerge from the city of Detroit, which is known for producing great fighters. He's a certified all-time great and yet he may be underrated. Hearns had very fast hands, put his punches together in combination and threw them with hurtful intentions. He has to be regarded as one of the top five pound-for-pound punchers in boxing history. Hearns was taller, with a longer reach, with faster hands and a bigger punch than practically all the other great welterweight champs. There isn't a worthy knockout compilation on YouTube that doesn't feature some of Hearns' most sensational knockouts.

Hearns fought during a time when there was intense competition at 147/160 and stars the likes of himself, Roberto Duran, Sugar Ray Leonard, Marvin Hagler and Wilfred Benitez, to a slightly lesser degree, emerged. Hearns beat up Sugar Ray Leonard more than any other fighter ever did while Ray was in his prime during their first fight, in a close but losing effort. And their rematch eight years later was scored a draw, despite Leonard having gone on record admitting that Hearns deserved the decision. During his junior middleweight title bout versus Benitez,

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who'd only lost to Leonard at the time, Hearn out-boxed perhaps the slickest fighter in boxing at the time to capture the title. Hearn knocked out Duran with one right hand during the second round of their junior middleweight title bout, and despite Roberto fighting on, he's never been counted out in a fight before or after facing Hearn. In his fight for the undisputed middleweight title versus champ Marvin Hagler, Hearn shook Hagler more so than any other opponent ever did before he was stopped by Hagler in the third round.

Hearn went on to stop Juan Roldan in four rounds for a piece of the middleweight title and lost it to Iran Barkley via a TKO in the third round. He won a piece of the light heavyweight title twice with a stoppage in 10 rounds over Dennis Andries, and then four years later out-boxed the undefeated Virgil Hill to win the WBA version. From 1994 through 2000 Hearn won regional and fringe titles fighting as a cruiserweight. For historical purpose you could say that Hearn did his best work between 1977-91. And during those 14 years Hearn never ducked or backed down from any fighter who was in the running to fight him. He had the heart of a wounded lion and was fearless. He also was involved in some of the most exciting and thrilling fights in boxing history.

Sadly, he doesn't get his just due by some because he lost the two biggest signature fights of his career, versus Sugar Ray Leonard and Marvin Hagler. What's often overlooked is how Leonard is regarded by most fight experts as the greatest welterweight in history after Sugar Ray Robinson. Leonard was at his peak when he faced the 22 year old Hearn in their first fight, being that he had already defeated Benitez and Duran heading into his showdown with Hearn. Floyd Mayweather and Manny Pacquiao would be significant underdogs to the vintage Sugar Ray Leonard of 1981. And remember, Hearn was leading in the fight and had marked up Leonard's face and distorted his vision badly before running out of gas in the 14th round. Leonard would've been the betting favorite over every other welterweight in history except Robinson the night he fought Hearn. So I can't write Hearn off for losing their first fight. And he did get Leonard back in their rematch and dropped him twice during the fight.

In regards to Hearn's middleweight title bout versus Hagler, he did fracture his right hand in the first round after rocking Hagler in what may be the most ferocious round in boxing history. At the worst Hagler is among the five greatest middleweights ever. How many middleweights are beating Hagler the night he fought Hearn? On that night Hagler would've stopped Gennady Golovkin and Sergio Martinez one after the other on the same night. Again, is it justified to hold Hearn back because he couldn't beat Hagler and never got a rematch? And he did move up to light heavyweight, something Hagler talked about but never did. Marvin's career wins were over fighters his weight or ones who moved up in weight to challenge him.

Thomas Hearn was a victim of his birth certificate, being that he was in his prime during an era when the second greatest welterweight and an all-time top five middleweight were also in their prime. Hearn was born at the right time in the sense that he had other greats to measure himself against during his career. And what we found out was his punch, heart and character were the real deal. On the other hand, he came up at the wrong time because Leonard and then Hagler were at the top when he was seen as the next guy on the food chain.

Imagine how big of a superstar, hands down, Hearn would be today? He was willing to go up

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and fighter bigger champions without haggling over catch-weights. He'd be willing to fight anybody between 147/175 and fans would always come away feeling they got their money's worth, unlike today. He'd have a picnic fighting today's welterweights and junior middleweights. Hearn would've devastated Saul Alvarez with hooks to the body and right hands to the chin. Pacquiao could've never gotten close enough to land against Hearn without getting knocked out in the process. If Marquez put him away face first, he'd fly out of the ring as if he were wearing a cape against Hearn. As for Mayweather, well, Floyd turned a deaf ear when Paul Williams, a poor man's version of Hearn, was willing to fight him under any conditions Mayweather wanted. Hearn would've pounded Mayweather's arms and shoulders and hurt him bad before going in to finish him. Assuming Mayweather agreed to the fight without forcing Hearn to weigh in at 143 or less.

There's not one active fighter around today who has a resume that is equal to that of Thomas Hearn. Ask yourself whether anyone genuinely believes that, were Hearn around today, Floyd Mayweather would be on boxings' biggest stage by himself?

Frank Lotierzo can be contacted at GlovedFist@Gmail.com

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Grimm says:

I like this piece, and I liked Tommy Hearn. Losses like the ones vs Leonard & Hagler only adds to his resume.

A one-in-a-billion-kind-of-fighter.

tlig says:

Wow, Tommy's 55 already! Damn..everyone's getting really old.

brownsugar says:

I don't believe Hagler would have dominated GGG or even Sergio so convincingly.

Hagler was solid, dependable, and professional...but sometimes he couldn't get untracked against boxers like Duran Briscoe and Leonard...but he used his boxing ability against bangers. GGG is a boxer-banger so I'm not so sure of this assessment.

Matthew says:

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Well said. Hearn would be the best fighter in the world if he were fighting today. There isn't a single fighter between 147 and 175 that I would pick to beat him (a prime Hopkins maybe, but not today's version).

kidcanvas says:

nobody around today would beat thomas nobody

Hop says:

[!]"Tommy Hearn at 160 pounds can knock out a heavyweight. There's never been a man his weight that punched as hard as Tommy Hearn."[/!]

(In this clip if you want to hear it: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5myL5x-qmd8>)

I think everyone on this site knows that Hearn is my favorite.

Radam G says:

That is HIGHLY exaggerated Iron boxer TALK, Hop! It is nothing to it. At 158lbs, Bob FitzSimmons, Tommy Burns at 168lbs, Jacks Dempsey at 182lbs, Rocky Marciano at 188lbs, James "Hurricane" Carter at 153lbs, Clint Jackson at 147lbs and even "Little Man" Harold Petty at 112lbs knocked "out a heavyweight."

Iron Mike Tyson was being hyperbolic. Anybody of any size, who can shoot a punch with 750lbs to 1500lbs of pressure, "can knock out a heavyweight." All the above done it tons of times. I've even kayoed heavies in sparring sessions.

Size doesn't matter, but to fear mongers and cowards. Knowing how to apply the sport of pugilism is what kayos a Jack or Joker, not size. Holla!

amayseng says:

Radam is correct, everyone has an off button if they are hit right and with enough force, of course you have to have the power to do this.

In PT school we learned when the head turns at a certain speed and force from say a hook to the chin, as the head rotates with that force due to the pressure in the cervical spine the central nervous system shuts you down and puts you to sleep for protection.

this is why when you see a guy take a crushing hook on the chin and the head turns they go out....with proper force of course..

and boy did tommy hearn have that proper force and punching power. that right hand he landed on duran should have put him to sleep for a month...

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hearns would without a doubt be a monster in today's boxing world.....he was back in the day fighting against boxings all time best..

Radam G says:

Late at night in P-Islands, and I cannot sleep. I cannot even creep. Hehehehe! The wifey and moms got a security guard right outside my room. Danggit!

Anyway! Enough about the minute problems of Radam G.

Straight to the point about this copy.

Nostalgia is a dangerous thing that often causes inattention blindness to many excellent pugilists of yesteryears. Super-sharp pugilistic scribe F-lo was as excellent as they came in the amateurs. But I'm not feeling him an iota about Hitman Hearn -- the amateur or professional kick-arse.

The Hitman had problems with shorter lateral-movement and buzzsaw fighters that he could not psyche out -- with that Sonny "Night Train" Liston's staredown -- all the way back to the amateurs.

To name three amateurs -- Mike Ayala, Aaron Pryor and Howard Davis. They beat him like a drum. Make him look like a BUM!

In the pros, Hitman Tommy had similar problems with the same type of fighters. The 5-foot-7 and a-half-of-inch Marvelous Marvin Hagler bombed him out. The 5-foot-9 and a-half-of-inch Sugar Ray Leonard kayoed him in Bout I. Even the 5-foot-8 James Kinchen whupped up on the Hitman. But Tommy was given a majority-decision gift. And he did beat a-tick-below 5-foot-9 Wilfred Benitez in a majority decision.

But that decision against James "The Heat" Kinchen stunk so badly that the powers that be still have not released their copyrights from the film/video so that I can lodge the bout on Daily Motion or Youtube. Besides even NBC's peacock have not released it footage.

Boxing is full of optical illusions. No way that the Hitman would've or could've just walkover the nowadays crops of welterweights to light heavyweights.

Let call a spade a spade. BTW, FYI, just as the late, great super-boxing guru Manny Steward kept the K-bros/docs from fighting James "Lights Out" Toney, he kept Tommy away from fighting the likes of Aaron Pryor as a pro.

A lot of magic is all up in da grill of da game. And people don't know how the optical illusions of the magic is done. And until they know how the illusion is done. In the words of Uncle Rogers Mays: "Dey don't know syet 'bout boksing!"

As time goes by, nostalgia lives like a lie in the fog of war. And if you don't know that, it will go

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far. And turn everybodee and dey momma of yesteryears into a collected flawless superstar. Holla!

Hop says:

@ Radam

My point in quoting Tyson was not that it be taken in such a literal way (I don't know enough to evaluate that), but simply to show that a fighter who is known both for his heavy hitting and also for being a genuine student of the sport's history had very high praise indeed for Thomas Hearn's power.

Also, FWIW, I had always heard that some felt Kinchen deserved the decision over Hearn's, so when it was finally uploaded on YT a couple years ago I watched it carefully and scored it. JMO, ok? -- but I felt Hearn's won it, and by more than a point or two (despite that round 4 debacle, which I think I scored 10-7). BTW, Gil Clancy (never a favorite ring commentator of mine) was at his broadcasting worst for this one, if I remember correctly. Kinchen was a fridge, though, weathering dozens of Hit-Man shots seemingly unfazed.

Matthew says:

I too watched the Hearn's-Kinchen fight for the first time a couple years ago, and I thought Kinchen did enough to win. Not a great performance by Hearn's; he seemed disinterested, but showed a lot of heart to be able to survive the fourth round (even if you could make a case for a disqualification due to excessive holding). While he was definitely no longer in his prime, he wasn't completely shot (as he proved in both the Leonard rematch and his fight against Virgil Hill). I think the Kinchen fight (as well as the Barkley loss) gave Leonard the feeling that Hearn's was certainly vulnerable, and based on that he granted him the rematch. As we all know, Leonard was lucky to get a draw.

Radam G says:

Thanks for that info, Hop. I see that Hearn's-Kinchen is indeed permanently on YouTube. I put my G-Fam personal tape on there for years, but was knocked off because the copyright laws that NBC, CBS, ABC, ESPN and USA would use to kick footage off.

There is some much footage fights and sparring going back a 100 years. Keepers have this footage all up in the attics. Holla!

Hop says:

[QUOTE=Matthew;38819] I too watched the Hearn's-Kinchen fight for the first time a couple years ago, and I thought Kinchen did enough to win.[/QUOTE]

You (& Radam) are in large company, Matthew. I thought more of TH's performance than you did, sounds like. I certainly do agree that the 2nd Barkley fight marked clearly the beginning of

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the end for the great Thomas Hearn. The closest he ever came, IMO, to having a "bad fight". I still would contend that Tommy never fought a [I]bad[/I] fight, though, which cannot be said for some former champions, even great ones.

Grimm says:

I remember the first fight between Hearn & Leonard being so big even the european pornmags did pieces on it - which I of course read being a young teenager. Didn't get to actually see the fight until a couple of years later, and despite the time passed I was hypnotized by the skill, ferocity and intensity of the fight, from both fighters. Clearly one of the best fights I've ever seen - and I've seen some - which, in my world, equates to both men being great.

Tommy gave Leonard a whipping in Leonards prime, before being stopped, and he did it like a mean matador intent on taking the bull out the most brutal way possible. Tommy talked the talked, but he also walked the walk. Neither you nor I really knows, Radam, but I believe he would have ripped through most of todays fighters with relative ease. I have a hard, hard time envisioning anyone today withstand the punishment he dished out to Leonard or Hagler.

On the matter of punching power: yes, it is primarily a matter of technical execution, but speed and mass are parts of it. If still capable of cracking like a monster while having lesser mass than men not hitting as hard, you have to have both technical perfection and some grains of speed. It was Tysons way of saying he was impressed. In Hearn case, he also benefitted from his height - he could throw his punches downward vs shorter men and had perfected the technique by courtesy of Manny Steward - shoulder, back, hip and feet correlated to create beauty of devastating violence. When he gained weight he lost a step in both his technique and speed, and hence his lower knockout ratio.

Not arguing with anybody or disrespecting anyones opinion - just saying I admire the deeds of The Motorcity Cobra. I feel you, Hop.

teaser says:

Tommy could box..he could BOOM BANGand if he would have had the chin of Duran Leonard or Hagler he would have beaten three out of three

Coxs Corner says:

Tommy Hearn was one of the greatest fighters of all time. I consider him the best 154 pounder ever. Nice article.

Radam G says:

@ Grimm. True Dat! True Dat! Tommy was whuppin' up on the Sugarman badly in Bout I. But that "You're BLOWIN it, SON! You're BLOWIN it" of the late GBGOAT Angie Dundee brought SRL through the night to get a needed KAYO!

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My bad, Hitman! Happy B-Day. Make that belated since it was yesterday USA mainland time. Holla!

The Good Doctor says:

[QUOTE=Coxs Corner;38849]Tommy Hearn was one of the greatest fighters of all time. I consider him the best 154 pounder ever. Nice article.[/QUOTE]

Agree with you completely and I am not sure there is a close #2.

tlig says:

Am I the only one who thinks the Leonard-Hearn rematch was better than the first bout between those guys? I know it wasn't as important or anticipated and that both dudes had declined at that point but I feel there was a lot more action.

If you look beyond the hype (difficult I know) that first bout wasn't that thrilling. There were long periods of tactical apprehension where each guy seemed reluctant to let his hands go; I've even read reports stating certain sections of the crowd were booing for the lack of action.

I also would like to point out that this write-up gives Tommy way too much credit. With the chin he had you couldn't just write off any opponent's chances.

the Roast says:

Great comments from everyone. Hearn is near the top of the Roast's all time favs. I was 14 in '81 and the Showdown was my first superfight. I was a big SRL fan but after the fight I was won over by the way Tommy fought and the heart he showed that night. Hearn would wreck all the top fighters we have today, unless they landed a big punch first the way Iran did of course.

Domenic says:

Thomas "The Motor City Cobra" Hearn would be a mainstream star at the LeBron James level if he were fighting today. With today's crop, I think it's a foregone conclusion that virtually every fight would be a rerun of Hearn - Duran. He'd be untouchable at every weight class from welter to cruiser, wherever he chose to fight. He may even have a shot at heavyweight. He had talked about fighting Lennox Lewis back around 2000 and he may have gotten Lewis out of there.

amayseng says:

I agree, I don't think anyone would beat Hearn today. Hearn was whooping a prime srl before being stopped and arguably won the rematch, srl the second best ww in history only behind srr. Hearn today would actually be worth a PPV event and payday, unlike Floyd, who I love, but refuse to pay 75\$ to watch him get shot and bicycle to easy wins..

damn that was the best era in boxing.....Hearn, Duran, Hagler, Leonard,

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tlig says:

Good gawd! Some of the posts on this thread had to have been made in jest. I've never seen anyone hype up Marvin Hagler or Ray Leonard in this manner yet each guy kicked his ***.

Radam G says:

But A-Seng, all eras are full of the optical illusion of ducking. Three of the four of that time ducked Aaron "Hawk Time" Pryor. And ducking ain't bad. It is one of the best shots of the game. And as time goes, we should forget this shot. And call a spade a space. And let nobody hide in the shade.

Magic can make all of us not dig deep. On surface appearance is often bunk. Holla!

Radam G says:

BTW, it is greatly exaggerated about the Hitman's chin-ness. His problems came from a wide stance on those pencil legs and not movement his noggin on that long neck. Holla!

Hop says:

[QUOTE=Radam G;38895]BTW, it is greatly exaggerated about the Hitman's chin-ness. His problems came from a wide stance on those pencil legs and not movement his noggin on that long neck. Holla![/QUOTE]

It is exaggerated, you're right. It's such a tired thing to read about Tommy's "glass chin". What he had was a "susceptible" chin. A "slightly less than average" chin. He did [U]not[/U] have a "rock" chin. However, for all those who act like Hearn could [U]never[/U] take a punch and prevail, revisit the Hearn-Roldan fight. Juan Domingo Roldan is a guy who TKO'd James Kinchen, and threw everything he had at Thomas, even wobbling him a time or two. BUT, Hearn weathered it, KO'd Roldan in dramatic fashion, and became the first man to win world titles in four different weight divisions in the process.

BTW, one of my favorite post-fight interviews ever is the one after that fight, with Hagler in the ring as a part of the broadcast team. You can just see the mutual respect they had for each other. Plus Tommy was genuinely likable. Better stop typing now, I'm starting to miss the Hitman.

Grimm says:

[QUOTE=tlig;38893]Good gawd! Some of the posts on this thread had to have been made in jest. I've never seen anyone hype up Marvin Hagler or Ray Leonard in this manner yet each guy kicked his ***.[/QUOTE]

Unlike Leonard or Hagler, with a Hearn fight came the promise of a possible destruction in the most violent and instant manner - and much like with Tyson, that's always an appetizer for our

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primal instincts. He was the executioner long before The Executioner. A fighter like that is bound to be sorely missed.

brownsugar says:

Hearn was one of my favorites ...I jumped on the bandwagon well before the Pipino Cuevas fight by keeping myself informed of boxing news by reading it 6 months after it transpired. Thru archaic devices like a papyrus (I mean news print) copy of The Ring magazine in the horse and buggy pre-internet days.

As awesome as Hearn was, certain kinds of durable fighters had his number.

But at least he fought them all.

I think Hearn (like RG said) would find the same type of Kryptonite today because no "hand by his sides fighter " like Hearn could duck all the punches...and protect his Less than iron chin simultaneously.

I honestly believe that deep within the lair of The Money Team... In the hidden vaults and archives and countless boxer profiles secured in 6inch thick titanium alloy vaults.....lies a perfect blueprint (copy write protected by the boxing labs of the Mayweather Gym of course) capable of nullifying and dismantling Hearn prime Gun...his bazooka-like right hand.

I think Keith Thurman would take him and a prime Pacquiao could shock the string bean stalker because he never saw anything like him back in the Golden Era days.

Today boxing is a world of the haves and the have nots.....only far too few "have IT"and far too many "have NOT"

amayseng says:

Wow B sug Keith Thurman can take the Hitman? The Hitman who was beating up and out boxing SRL? One of that eras best?

Thurman is solid and has promise but he is yet to awe me inside that ring.

Hop says:

Enjoyed the humor and creativity of your post, B-Sug. (chuckling)

Domenic says:

Hearn was a great fighter. Emmanuel Steward said that after the 2nd Leonard fight, the only person who didn't complain about getting robbed was Hearn himself. Leonard is now on the record that he lost that fight.

stormcentre says:

This guy (the {real} Hitman) is a legend.

He fought anyone, anytime, anywhere. And, he wasn't afraid of a challenge.

Nuff said.

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dino da vinci says:

[QUOTE=stormcentre;39050]This guy (the {real} Hitman) is a legend.

He fought anyone, anytime, anywhere. And, he wasn't afraid of a challenge.

Nuff said.[/QUOTE]

Totally agree.

tlig says:

I'm currently reading Ray Leonard's autobiography from last year (the recent ESPN documentary no Mas got me interested). I have never liked the man but I must say this is one very intriguing read, I always thought of his public persona as highly phoney in much the same way the latter day George Foreman's is.

I enjoyed reading his take on both fights with The Hitman, so much that I went on YouTube to watch the last couple of rounds of their first bout again. Ray was special. Damn near had Tommy run out of the ring to get away from the punishment he was pouring on him.

gibola says:

Agree Hearns best 154lb fighter ever, the only one in my time I think gets close would be a prime Mike McCallum. When McCallum stopped McCrory then Curry it would've been great if he'd fought Tommy next at 154. I think Mike is a very live underdog. Julian Jackson was nowhere near the fighter Hearns and McCallum were but with his power and Tommy's chin, Julian had a shot of beating Tommy too on any given night. At 154 Hearns KO's Mosley, ODLH, Alvarez, Trinidad, Wright. He would outbox great boxers like PBF and T Norris. Hearns top at 154, McCallum just behind, then a gap for me.

Radam G says:

Good stuff, gibola! But don't get carry away. Nobody kayos "Sugar" Shane Mosley or Ronald "Winky" Wright. Some fighters just don't ever go to sleep in that squared jungle.

The Hitman has been knocked out in the amateurs and pros. NEVER have the Sugarman Mosley or the "Winky[man]." Holla!

Hop says:

[I][B]WAAHH![/B][I] ... I miss the Hitman ... sniff, sniff ...

[IMG]http://i41.tinypic.com/23v0rqd.png[/IMG]

Radam G says:

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Hehehehehe! Is it funny Friday there on the U.S. mainland? I'm in tears from laughing. Holla!