

Clinton Woods Betting Heavy

Written by Rick Folstad

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If I'm Clinton Woods, I'm betting heavy on the other guy. I'm rounding up my family's life savings, robbing my piggy bank, taking out a loan and I'm getting a buddy to call up a London bookie.

"Put it all on Roy Jones Jr.," I'm telling my buddy. "Get me the best odds you can."

Unfortunately, even the best odds aren't going to make Woods a rich man. Still, it's something good coming out of something bad.

Then, if I'm still Clinton Woods, I'm going to go out and fight the fight of my life, try everything I can to become the undisputed light-heavyweight champion of the world.

If by some crazy miracle I win, I'm going to become a very wealthy man my next fight.

I'll be able to pay everyone back with huge bonuses.

If I lose, which is almost as close to a sure thing as tomorrow's sunrise, I collect my purse along with my meager gambling profits and no one gets hurt. I go back home to Sheffield, England, buy a round or two for the boys in the pub and talk about my exciting trip to Portland, Ore., and my one-and-only shot at the big time.

It's one way Woods will come out of this Saturday-night fiasco with something more than his head in his hands.

A blue-collar guy from the Old Country, Woods is 32-1 with 19 knockouts, which somehow makes him the mandatory sacrifice to Jones, the guy with all the belts, all the money and all the excuses.

How Woods got to be the mandatory challenger is something you don't want the wife or kids to hear. It's a sordid tale about money and greed and poor guys from places like Australia and England getting fattened up before getting fed to a bored lion.

Jones (46-1, 37 KOs) himself isn't too sure what Woods is doing in Portland getting ready to fight for the title. On a conference call Monday, he hinted that Woods might not be his toughest opponent to date.

"Do I think he's the guy I should be fighting? No," Jones said. "I don't think he did a thing to deserve to fight me. I don't know why he's ranked No. 1, but he is."

So Jones said he has to fight him. It's boxing's way. He doesn't want to go to court.

The truth is, Jones can fight anyone he wants. He doesn't need all those belts to earn his place

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in history, and he sure doesn't need the money. If he's looking to leave a legacy behind him, he's not going to do it fighting guys like Clinton Woods or Glenn Kelly.

While he's bickering over whether he gets paid \$6 million or \$10 million for a fight - or demanding \$25 million to fight Dariusz Michalczewski in Germany - his own history is quietly becoming a short story instead of a great novel. Ten years from now, no one's going to think of Roy Jones and remember how much money he made when he fought Clinton Woods. They're going to look back and wonder why he fought him in the first place, why he wasn't fighting guys like Michalczewski or Vassily Jirov or Antonio Tarver or even Bernard Hopkins in a rematch. They're going to wonder why money became such an issue for someone who had so much of it.

Sure, the fight game is a business, but it's pretty tough to buy your way into boxing history. Besides, no one cares how rich Jones is. We just want to see if he's as good as he was back when he was fighting for more than just money..

If you're not into tragicomedy, Saturday's fight card on HBO won't be a total loss. On the undercard, Bronco McKart (45-3, 29 KOs) will fight Winky Wright (43-3, 25 KOs) for Wright's IBF junior middleweight title. It's the third time the two will have fought, Wright winning the first two fights.