

Bernard Hopkins says Ronald Winky Wright is next

Written by Rick Folstad

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Whoa, what's this, a little integrity? Some sincerity? Some crazy guy keeping his word?

It's a new high for the fight game, a little of the good stuff creeping in among all the bad. At least that's how it sounds, though past history has always served as an ugly reminder that a fighter's word is usually the worst part of his game. Still.

Undisputed middleweight champ Bernard Hopkins says Ronald "Winky" Wright is next on his dance card, though no one is printing up any tickets yet.

Following his recent 12-round thrashing of William Joppy, Hopkins said he hopes to fight Wright - the IBF junior-middleweight champ - some time before next summer.

He's kidding, right?

"Next year, Winky Wright is my top priority," Hopkins was quoted as saying by Fightnews. "His people can contact my people right now."

My people are having a hard time swallowing it.

"Winky is the only one calling Bernard Hopkins out," said Bernard Hopkins. "Winky is willing to step in and risk his career and status as a top fighter. That gives me respect for Winky."

Winky is also risking life and limb, but it's about time he had a big payday. That's what he's in this game for. You don't fight pro for its emotional rewards. If you're not in it for the money, you shouldn't be in it at all.

If Hopkins is true to his word, Wright would be paid handsomely for his foray into the raging world of "The Executioner." And it's about time Wright shared the bright lights and top billing with an icon. He's been banging on the door of big-name fighters - including Oscar De La Hoya - begging for a fight for about a year now, yet no one but Hopkins has actually said he'll throw the door open.

Still, you keep thinking it must be a mistake, a mean joke on the part of Hopkins. Fight Winky Wright? Sure, as soon as Mickey Mouse admits his coke addiction.

Why does it sound like a joke? Because Wright can't be that lucky. It'd be like the Cubs winning the Series, Screech marrying a beauty queen, Barney making Sheriff.

Wright has been riding this Rodney Dangerfield "I don't get no respect," train for so long, is he sure he wants to get off?

You bet he does.

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And if Hopkins doesn't keep his word, what about Shane Mosley? There's a guy in dire need of a fist fight. He was supposed to face Ricardo Mayorga on March 13 on pay-per-view. Big money, big opportunity, big hoopla.

But Mayorga was also supposed to beat Cory Spinks last week. Funny isn't it, how the best laid plans of mice and, well, you know the spiel.

Wright would seem to be the ideal fight for Mosley because he holds the WBC and WBA junior-middleweight titles, and it would seem a natural for Mosley to want to snag that last fat belt for his trophy case. Besides, the title "undisputed junior-middleweight champion of the world," has a certain rare charm to it. Oscar never held that title.

So why are Mosley's people talking to Antonio Margarito's people? The WBO welterweight champ, Margarito is an excellent fighter, but his name isn't going to sell in Sheboygan. Besides that, he's scheduled to fight Hercules Kyvelos on Jan. 31. Suppose he loses? And even if he wins, how soon would he be ready to fight Mosley?

Meanwhile, Winky Wright has an open calendar. Call him collect.

It'd be a sad game if it weren't so funny.