Who is this guy and why is it so easy to believe him? Seems like he's in the wrong line of work. Instead of throwing punches, he should be baptizing babies or handing out free lunches at church or finding ways to help poor widows pay the mortgage.

John Ruiz is the WBA heavyweight champion of the world, though he gets about as much respect as the runner-up in the frat-house Ping-Pong tournament. Outside of the Boston area and the Latino community, it's not John Ruiz, it's John Who?

He goes 36 tough rounds with Evander Holyfield and all he gets is his name mispronounced.

And now he's going to fight light-heavyweight champ Roy Jones Jr., a smaller guy with fast hands and a faster mouth who thinks he's the best thing to come along since remote control and chip dip.

Ruiz and Jones are supposed to fight March 1 in Las Vegas, though I wouldn't bet the wife's fine China on it happening. So far, their fight has been nothing but rumor, innuendo, posturing, denial and back peddling. And that's just Roy Jones' side of it. On a teleconference call Tuesday, Jones said the reason it took him a dog's life to finally agree to the fight was promoter Don King, who apparently had a few issues to settle. Deals had to be cut, promises had to be made and broken. Palms had to be greased.

"Don't make it seem like I was the one who was holding out, because that is not me and those are not my points (what size ring and gloves will be used),." Jones said. "My points are little things that are going to matter 10 years from now. It was not Ruiz, it was dealing with Don King. If it had just been between me and Ruiz, the deal would have been done a long time ago."

Sure, Roy.

As easy as it is to take shots at King, you have to figure the pouting party in this month-long soap opera was Jones. Like he said three times during the teleconference, “Roy makes the final decision.’’

Later, Jones said nothing was going to get in the way of the fight because “Roy Jones and John Ruiz want this fight to happen, and they’ll come together and make it happen.’’

Obviously, Jones gets a kick out of referring to himself in the third person. Let me give it a try.

The writer thinks Roy Jones is a superbly gifted fighter but an arrogant SOB and the writer hopes Roy gets his Pensacola butt kicked, though the writer also thinks Jones will be too quick for Ruiz and that’s why Roy decided to fight him in the first place.

“I don’t know if I’ll continue to fight as a heavyweight (after the Ruiz fight),’’Jones went on. “It depends on how I feel.’’

Whatever.

Asked how he might react to getting hit by a heavyweight - someone 40 or 50 pounds heavier than the fighters he’s used to facing - Jones sounded like a carnival barker trying to sell tickets.

“That’s what everyone wants to see,’’ he said. “That’s why you’re just going to have to watch it.’’

Gee, thanks for the insight, Roy.

Suddenly, Jones decided he was done with the questions and the teleconference.

He said it was nice talking to everybody and he hung up .Click.

Roy? Hello?

You have to hand it to Jones. He makes it easy to cheer for Ruiz.

“This is a big challenge for me,” Ruiz said when it was his turn to chat with the press.

“I get a chance to show the world I can also box (instead of just slugging it out like he did with Holyfield). It’s going to be a great fight. His quickness against my strength.’’

The big question? Aside from a hefty payday, what does Ruiz gain by fighting Jones? If he loses, he lost to a light-heavy. If he wins, he beat a light-heavy.

“The only thing I have to gain is a win,’’ Ruiz said. “And I want to look good doing it.’’

Will they respect him then?

“I don’t think I will receive (respect) until 10 years down the line when I’m still the heavyweight champion,’’ Ruiz said.

That might just work.