Written by Steve Kim
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James Toney did exactly what he said he would do. The James Toney did exactly what he said he would do. The brash native of Ann Arbor, Michigan, representing the storied fighting tradition of Detroit, said that he would stand right in front of the bigger, stronger, Evander Holyfield and break him down piece by piece. He wouldn't be fighting like no blown-up middleweight.

After a relatively slow start, Toney would start to pot-shot Holyfield with quick right hands and begin to bury hard left hooks to the chiseled mid-section of 'the Real Deal'.

By the middle rounds, Toney was easily having his way with the aged legend. In the ninth stanza, Toney would send Holyfield to the canvas after a barrage of punches that he was powerless to stop or to even see coming. Mercifully, Don Turner, the long-time trainer of Holyfield, would do the humane thing by calling off the fight.

And before writing off this performance as Holyfield serving as a sacrificial lamb for the younger lion that is Toney; remember, it was Holyfield who was the betting favorite coming in. Holyfield was still considered a top ten heavyweight by most neutral polls; Ring Magazine had him rated number five prior to his bout with Toney.

So the question is now this, how would Toney fare against other world-class big men?

Toney's trainer Freddie Roach gives his thoughts and opinions on how his man might fare against the divisions best.

LENNOX LEWIS: " Emanuel Steward knows James Toney can beat Lennox Lewis and he'll never take the fight. At this point of his career, he's a big guy and all that… but James is way too slick for him. I don't see Lewis doing too much with James. I like that fight for James."

Wow, that's a bold comment by Roach. But perhaps he believes that Lewis has slipped to a point where his guy, giving up at least five inches and at least 30 pounds, has a shot against Lewis. On a pound-for-pound perspective, Toney has much more skill and craftiness than Lewis; but remember, this is heavyweight boxing.

ROY JONES: " A great fight, I would actually like to see them fight for both titles at 190. I say James is better at 190 but after his performance the other night, maybe he's not."

The last time they fought at 168 pounds, Toney was about as diligent in his training as a DMV worker, but you wonder if Jones' eclectic mix of speed and athletic ability would always be a problem for Toney. Would a heavier Toney be able to have any more success than he had in 1994?

Beyond that, you have to wonder if that fight can actually be made. Neither guy is about to give an inch at the negotiating table.

MIKE TYSON: " Dangerous early, once James gets by the third round with Tyson, I think he has him."

Roach has a special insight into Tyson, seeing as he trained him for his last bout. And Roach may be right on, the bottom line is that Tyson hasn't gone quality rounds since acid-washed jeans were still being worn in public. Yeah, it's been THAT long. Also, Toney showed a heavyweight's chin against Holyfield. If Tyson can't hurt you or intimidate you (and I'm not sure anyone can do that to Toney)…Tyson's just a shell of himself.

CHRIS BYRD: " James told me he has Chris' number. He says he used to beat him up every day in sparring and he'll fight him anytime, anywhere. The thing is Chris is kinda of a bad style, even when you beat him, it's possibly a boring fight and I don't think it's what the fans really want to see."

Roach is absolutely correct in his assessment of the aesthetic value of a Byrd-Toney fight. But he could also be a bit concerned that Byrd's movement and guile could give Toney fits, much the same way that Montell Griffin did - who beat Toney twice.

If they fought at 190 pounds, both Toney's cruiserweight belt and Byrd's heavyweight title could possibly be on the line, adding some intrigue. But the question is, do you really want to see two counter-punchers in the same ring together? I'd want to see that as much as I want to see another sequel to 'Police Academy'.

CORRIE SANDERS: " A good fight for James, Corrie Sanders is dangerous for about three rounds but I don't think he'll be able to hit James I like that fight for James."

Sanders, the current WBO titlist, is coming off a second round knockout of Wladimir Klitschko. Sanders' height, reach and power might give Toney fits, but you wonder if he has the boxing acumen of Toney. Remember, Sanders has shown in the past to have a shaky chin and if Toney can put enough punches together, that could become a factor.

DAVID TUA: "That's an interesting fight, he's got a good chin, he can punch, but he can be out-boxed easily, he's proved that in the past. James would have to fight a smart fight, but definitely a good fight for James."

This is an intriguing match-up because of Tua's power, but the reality is that Tua is as one-dimensional as the wishbone offense is in football and his over-reliance on one punch - his vaunted left hook- would most likely be an easy puzzle for a defensive master like Toney to solve.

DONE DEAL

Don Turner made quite a chilling comment when he said that he threw in the towel for his man because he had already seen four men die in the ring during his years in boxing and that he didn't want to see a fifth.

I'm not sure that Holyfield was that close to the brink of death, but it was evident that Holyfield's days as an elite fighter are clearly over. His punches came slower and slower, his reflexes no longer sharp, unable to take advantage of openings he once capitalized on with ease and unsuccessful in getting out of harms way to oncoming punches.

He said later that he would be 'going back to the drawing board' but it's clear that the only plans he should be making are for a retirement.

But you get the sense that he wo'nt. After all, this is boxing and it never ends that way. In more ways than one, Holyfield can be put in the same category as a Joe Louis and Muhammad Ali.

NO DEAL

A source within the Nevada State Athletic Commission has told me that if Holyfield were to fight again, there would be heavy opposition to that and he could be refused a boxing license.

He's already been placed on a 90 day suspension - which is toothless in the case of Holyfield who fights only once a year or two anyway - but the commission is praying that Holyfield will come to the realization that his fighting days are over by himself. They simply don't want the headaches and publicity they would receive for this kind of case.

Now, some may disagree with a commission denying any man a right to earn a living, but then, if the commission doesn't have that power to pull boxing licenses from those who are no longer fit to box, what are the commissions there for?