

## Dream Fights of 2003

Written by Steve Kim  
Thursday, 26 December 2002 21:00

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This Saturday night in Las Vegas, Jameel 'Big Time' McCline, who HBO's Jim Lampley called 'the best American heavyweight', takes on the highly touted Wladimir Klitschko.

On paper it looks like an intriguing and appealing match-up. It says here that it's a mismatch.

Yeah, McCline is on a decent run having beat Michael Grant, Lance Whitaker and Shannon Briggs in succession. But seriously, that's 20 feet worth of heavyweight victories that are suspect. Break it down, Grant was always overrated and a HBO creation that was fed to the lions against Lennox Lewis. Whitaker was developing nicely until he went 'Goofi', and Briggs is, well, Briggs.

And Lampley's assertion that McCline is this country's best big man? I'd take Chris Byrd and Evander Holyfield in a heartbeat over McCline, who is a nice story of overcoming adversity and overachieving, though. It's well known that McCline served time in prison for gunrunning and basically began his pro career without any amateur bouts under his belt. And he began that career in his mid-20's, so for a guy of his limited experience to have accomplished what he has, it's quite impressive in that context.

But ultimately that will be his downfall against Klitschko, who many are tabbing as the heavyweight heir apparent. Klitschko is a guy who has boxed for most of his life and was good enough to have won an Olympic gold medal in Atlanta, Georgia in the 1996 Olympic Games. This is a huge advantage for the hulking Ukrainian. He is a much more fluid and natural fighter than his counterpart who, like most big athletic kids in America, played sports like basketball and football and then only decided to try on a pair of Everlasts as a last resort.

In fact, if you think about it, guys like McCline and the trio he downed, all have the same physical features. There all above 6'4 and weigh between 240-260 pounds. And

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in the case of Grant and Whitaker, all had (as teenagers) more experience in basketball and football than boxing. Sadly, the days of the great American heavyweight may be a thing of the past. Quite simply, there are plenty of short, little guys that will box from an early age, but with the lure of the other professional sports - with their college scholarships and lucrative professional contracts- the American heavyweight talent pool is filled with a bunch of failed power forwards and offensive tackles.

And looking at the current crop of U.S. bred heavyweight hopefuls; the prospects of getting a dominant American heavyweight seem sluggish at best. Malik Scott, Dominick Guinn, Joe Mesii, DaVarryl Williamson and Derrik Bryant aren't taking anyone's breath away as of this moment.

If Wladimir Klitschko turns out to be the real thing and can supplant heavyweight supremacy from Lewis in the near future- he may have a very long reign at the top. But remember though, this was a guy who petered out and lost to American journeyman Ross Purrrity on his home turf, so it's not like he's invincible.

McCline is a tough guy with a good head on his shoulders and you know he will come in completely prepared and focused. But I just wonder if a guy who was a bit apprehensive against Briggs is ready for a guy like Klitschko who's as impressive an offensive fighter as you will see for a heavyweight.

It says here he isn't.

### ROY ROLLS THE DICE

I gotta hand it to Roy Jones, after what seemed like years of negotiating, he finally signed on the dotted line to take on WBA heavyweight titlist John Ruiz on March 1st at the Thomas and Mack Arena in Las Vegas.

And it's a no-lose situation for Jones. If he loses, hey, it was a heavyweight he was giving away about four or five inches to and about 40 pounds. And if he

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wins, he makes a bit of history.  
way, he comes out of this with

Either  
at least \$10 million. Not bad at all.

But I think this is a tough (and quite possibly ugly) fight for Jones.  
I talked to Chris Byrd this past weekend  
and Byrd, who ended his career as a super  
middleweight (and a silver medallist in the 92 Olympics) told  
me," I'm just beginning to get used to being a  
heavyweight right now. Roy doesn't really know what he's  
getting himself into." And  
this from a guy who's fought at heavyweight the past 10 years.

And think about this; Bob Foster was possibly the biggest and  
hardest punching light heavyweight ever, and he was routinely  
drilled by heavyweights when he moved up in  
weight - and he was facing guys that topped out at 220 pounds.  
Now believe me, I'm not putting 'the  
Quiet Man' anywhere near the stratosphere of  
fighters like Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier, but the law of physics  
has to be at work here somewhere.

But regardless, my hat's off to Roy.

### PAY-PER-VIEW

Sources tell me that the 'Real Fights' pay-per-view show featuring  
IBF lightweight titlist Paul Spadafora did around 14,000  
buys- which isn't bad considering that they needed 9,000  
buys to break even and that it was going up against a show on  
Showtime on November 9th.

These smaller pay-per-view shows are going to be more prevalent  
in the next year with dates becoming harder  
to get on both HBO and Showtime and with both networks  
trimming their boxing budgets.

Oh, for the days of boxing on ABC, NBC and CBS. Seems so long  
ago. Well, actually it was.

### TYSON'S TRAINER?

It seemed like a lock just a few weeks ago that Buddy McGirt was  
going to be in the corner of one Mike Tyson.  
Well, it seems McGirt is a bit hesitant

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to leave his Vero Beach, Florida roots and stop working with his vast stable of fighters. So now the Tyson brain trust is looking at other options.

Names like Freddie Roach, Bouie Fisher, Kenny Adams and Thell Torrance have all been kicked around.

But seriously, does it matter who trains Tyson at this point? He is what he is. A faded fighter who still has some marketability and can knockout a few guys here and there. I'm not sure that any trainer can really make that big of an impact at this point.

### WHERE THERE'S SMOKE

Lou DiBella, former boxing czar at HBO, has inked Derrick 'Smoke' Gainer to a deal.

I say good luck to DiBella in getting anywhere with that. Gainer, in the past, has proven to be quite a stinker on Roy Jones' undercards.

I have a hard time believing that the likes of Marco Antonio Barrera, Erik Morales and Johnny Tapia will ever get in the ring with that guy.