

Hey Slappy Joe Calzaghe, Bernard's A No Go

Written by Michael Woods
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We as a society have a difficult time living in the moment. We don't pause much more than a second to smell the roses before we're plotting how we can add more roses to the bunch, and we can improve our smelling capacity to smell them more effectively.

With that in mind, I thought it would be nice to let Joe Calzaghe smell the roses, let him savor his 21st title defense.

OK, finished.

Time to ponder what's next for "Slappy Joe." (And you know, Joe, I use that tag with good humor, with full comprehension that even if you don't subscribe to the "shortest distance between two points is a straight line" dictum, you are still an ace boxer.)

It's looking like a fight with Bernard Hopkins, the wily vet from Philadelphia, is in the cards for Slappy's next one. The bout would be held up north, at 175 pounds, as Slappy would wave bye bye to 168, for a meaningful match at light heavy.

Meaningful, that is, if money is the main consideration. And since this is boxing, and a fighter's life is on the line every time, he should be well compensated.

There must be ample reward for putting your head on the chopping block. I'm all for it. But.

I'm not feeling a Calzaghe/Hopkins match.

I think it would be a plug ugly festival of slapping and holding, grabbing and ducking. The money, of course, won't be plug ugly. From a money standpoint, this match makes the most sense.

Hopkins is the only obvious option for Slappy from the economic standpoint. Roy Jones would've commanded same-neighborhood money, but he and Tito Trinidad are due to tangle on January 19, so his eyes are on that prize.

Hopkins, no fool, is keen to fight another boxer who cannot hurt him, for another tasty payday.

"He said after the fight that he would fight me anywhere, even in my backyard, but I'm not asking him to come to Philadelphia," Hopkins said to Dan Rafael of ESPN.com. "I wouldn't ask him to come to anywhere but Yankee Stadium. Hopefully for boxing, and for our legacy, it will happen."

I'm not on board with Bernard, for the good of boxing, or for the legacy. For the retirement accounts of both, yes.

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From the legacy standpoint, Joe has few good options. He beats Bernard, which he will, because Bernard will throw about half as many punches as Kessler did, and he didn't throw nearly enough, and people shrug.

Eh, you beat a 42-year-old man. Same thing with a win over Jones.

Shrug. You beat an old guy.

Glen Johnson, same deal, only it's a harder fight, for less money. Same goes for Clint Woods, the IBF 175 pound champ. Money would be OK, cause he's a Brit, but at this juncture, Slappy can pick and choose, and he's going to choose a name. It won't be Lucian Bute, who has the IBF's 168 pound strap that Joe tossed to fight Peter Manfredo, though if I were his promoter, I'd be squawk real, real loud, and beefing why everyone's calling Joe C the undisputed, unified 168 pound champion. Unified, to be, means owning every damned belt out there. Shoot, Bute, wouldn't you like a crack at THE MAN at 168? Or maybe he knows he wouldn't stand a chance against Slappy Joe?

Chad Dawson makes tons of sense, from everything from a money standpoint, so to request Calzaghe fight the Connecticut -based WBC light heavy king would be a waste of time. Anyway, the name I'm thinking of is Kelly Pavlik. Let's go out on a limb and say Pavlik beats Taylor in their February rematch. Wouldn't you like to see how Pavlik trudges forward through Slappy's tosses?

He's young, so no one could say anything about Slappy beating on a faded vet. Pavlik is 25, a Top Rank fighter, so they could help manufacture Calzaghe/Pavlik scrap into a superfight in 2008. The money wouldn't maybe be as much as Slappy could get for Hopkins, but how much does money matter?

I know, dumb question...

Calzaghe seems like he's leaning towards the fight with the best risk/reward ratio, with Hopkins.

"Hopkins is 42 but the guy is like a freak with regards to age. He's in great shape, lives healthily, is very professional, and is in great condition," said Calzaghe to Gareth Davies of the UK Telegraph. "He's proved himself to be the No 1 in the division. I want to go up to 175lb and fight the best. It was great fighting in front of a home crowd, but I can't see him coming to Cardiff. I'll fight him anywhere."

Slappy, here's a deal for you.

Chuck the Hopkins idea.

Take the winner of Pavlik/Taylor, and I'll throw you this bone.

I won't call you Slappy Joe anymore.

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I know it ain't a mint, but it's the best I can do.

Give us fans a compelling matchup against a young buck in his physical prime, as Kessler is. That's the best you can do.