Written by Frank Lotierzo
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Today, January 15th, light heavyweight champ Bernard Hopkins 52-5-2 (32) turns 47 years old. And at age 47 he's no doubt one of the top 10 pound-for-pound boxers in the world along with being the ruler of the 175 pound division. Hopkins is also among the top three successful world champions to fight after age 40, with Archie Moore and George Foreman being the other two.

Foreman was a physical freak of nature aided tremendously by his overload of strength and punching power. George didn't out-box or fox any single opponent during his career. He walked them down and/or beat them down before he knocked them out. Comparisons between Foreman and Hopkins are never made because as fighters, outside of their great chins and toughness, they share nothing else in common.

The old fighter Hopkins is most often compared to because of their ring acumen and guile is former light heavyweight champion, Archie Moore (185-22-11 with 130 KOs), who retired at age 49. But really the only thing they share aside from age is intelligence. Moore had an equalizer in both hands and was a threat to end the fight at anytime during the first through 15th round. Even as an old fighter Archie tried to lull his opponents to open up and engage with him. Sometimes he'd do it by laying back and going into a shell, only to open up and explode when

he felt his man over committed or extended himself. Other times he'd put the pressure on and try to force them into a mistake and trade with him.

Another area where Hopkins and Moore differ is, Archie wasn't nearly as well conditioned as Hopkins is as an old fighter. Moore went rounds by fighting completely loose and relaxed the way an older Roberto Duran did. Archie's bouts were also more exciting and had more give and take than the bouts we've seen from the post 40 year old version of Hopkins. Even as an older fighter, Moore seldom lost many exchanges. Whereas Hopkins does everything he can to avoid exchanges as an older fighter, unless he is certain that he can get the upper hand or neutralize his opponent if they happen to catch him in between punches.

There's also another thing in which old Archie and Bernard are dissimilar and that's in their pre-fight antics and tactics. Sure, Archie would say that he used some ancient tricks to lose weight that he garnered from a witchdoctor he met when he was a teenager, but other than sometimes invoking evil spirits and voodoo, that was about it. On the other hand Hopkins will do whatever it takes by any means necessary to win the bout before a single punch is thrown. And that's because Hopkins isn't as physically capable of engaging with and straight up fighting his opponents as Moore was. As it's been mentioned here before, Bernard has to strip his opponent's gun of its bullets and then try to go in and rough them up or inflict a little physical or mental damage onto them if he can.

Because Hopkins has had so much success as a world championship caliber fighter after the age of 40, he's often compared to Archie Moore. And there's no doubt about it, they're the two best fighters over age 40 in terms of boxing skills. But the way in which they went about winning fights is a lot different. Moore had all the experience and wisdom of a fighter with over 200 professional fights, yet he retained a lot of his power and even into his late 40s it carried him and was something he could rely on to win. Trickery was no doubt a part of his game, but it was more of a Plan B than the single purpose of his strategy and fight plan.

Hopkins is great, but due to his lack of fight altering power, especially during his late thirties and forties period, Bernard needs to rely more on smoke and mirrors and a little deception and trickery to win. In addition to that, Bernard isn't above stretching the Marques of Queensberry rules in order to gain an advantage over a tough opponent. And that's not meant to be a shot at at him. Hopkins is of the mindset of most other great fighters, "whatever it takes to gain the upper hand and win." And that's something he's perfected.

If you really think about it, because of his lack of big finishing punch, Hopkins actually has had to fight harder and keep himself in better shape than Archie Moore had to as an older fighter/boxer. With Hopkins, it starts at the press conference announcing the fight and becomes more intense with every interview as the bout draws near. And this isn't something that should be held against him. It's more the case of him taking advantage of every thing in his tool box that's at his disposal. That makes him a smart fighter and partly the reason why he's never absorbed a single beating in the ring and is still fighting at an extremely high level at almost 50.

Forget about trying to compare the opponents of Bernard Hopkins and Archie Moore to determine who's the greater old fighter. Just embrace how they both used what they were blessed with as fighters and how they exceeded their limitations so late into their careers. And if you must make a distinction, how's this: Moore was more exciting and provided better action packed fights for the fans viewing as he was crowding 50 and Hopkins was better conditioned along with being more cunning and tricky, and as a result was hit less and endured less physical abuse and punishment.

Frank Lotierzo can be contacted at GlovedFist@Gmail.com

Comment on this article

dino da vinci says:

First, the picture is worth TEN thousand words. BHop realized the referee wasn't world class caliber so he chose to do push-ups. Why? Because instead of getting a warning, he received a big smile from the referee. But did the ref clean his gloves as you would after a knockdown? No. Why? Because BHop knew he wouldn't.

When a ref cleans the gloves of a fallen fighter, he's not doing it because it's symbolic. He's doing it because the canvas is a crazy place for various types of debris to land. With all the people climbing in and out of the ring (Just who are some of these people anyway?) stuff gets stuck to their shoes, stuff falling out of their pockets, etc., etc.

Watch Hopkins, much to smart for his own good.

Also, it's funny what you think about in a course of a day. Several days ago we were discussing the world's current crop of best fighters and Hopkins name came up. And it occurred to me, as he's becoming eligible for more and more discounts, he's not going anywhere, anytime soon. His dedication to his craft is well documented. He always comes prepared. If there is no mandatory retirement forced on him, this maniac is capable of fighting for another decade. Think about it. He shows no real signs of regressing. And actually, he is armed to the eye teeth

with knowledge. He's a top 5/7 P4Per in the world. I know, I know, you have the strategy to beat him. Problem is, we all have the same strategy to beat him, just keep the pressure on him for the full three minutes. Only problem is Joe Calzaghe has left the building, and some things always look better on paper than in execution.

amayseng says:

love him or hate him you must respect him. I am a huge fan of bernard which is ironic seeing as i used to dislike him.

people must realize the ol "ill never lose to a white boy" is just promoting and hoopla.

drama sells a fight and bernard is a master.

most impressive about bernard is his complete dedication and knowledge. he has perfected

his nutrition, training and recovery.

the man is a pure perfectionist. he schooled pascal twice and in the second time should

have received two knockdowns, quite impressive...

against chad dawson people said he was scared and ran, from what? dawson landed 4 punches in 2 rounds before the double leg takedown, and yes dawson tried that with pascal but was unable to get his feet out from underneath him...

bernard ran too much you say? shame on dawson then a fighter 17 years younger who couldnt track him down.

bernard is definitely top 10. just look at his accomplishments as of late , tarver, wright, pavlik, pascal twice.....

in fact i have moved both mayweather and pac out of my top 5 because they dont deserve to be in that group.

ali says:

@amayseng Pac & Mayweather are no longer in your top five wow!!!. .Anyway I've need been a fan of B-Hop inside the ring but admire how he's overcome a troubled pass..

amayseng says:

@ali

no, out of spite i have taken them out, illegitimately so ...hahaha
until they fight one another they are out of my personal and biased due to disappointment top

5. floyds ending with ortiz took away a quality win so has pacs fight with jmm really looking to lose that fight, a fight where shane ran for the hills and a zombie walking margacheato.....

so i put my top 5 with these guys below due to quality wins

sergio, ward, bhop, donaire and possibly jmm or wlad or vitali would take number 5

Radam G says:

I don't know! B-Hop's official, legal, boxing and actual age is as solid as a rock. But now the "Old Mongoose" is behind those "Pearly Gates" now, and even the angels are probably still asking what was his real age on earth? And I bet the late, great Sonny "Night Train" Liston is bragging on how when God Said "Let There Be Light," Sonny beat Archie to the switch to turn on the lights.

The powers that be of Archie's days gave him a lot of awards and kudos. They have given B-Hop ____! Dude becomes the oldest fart to officially win a major alphabet-sanctioning organization title belt and only the hardcore boksing fans and convicts in the P-state know that jive. I asked about 50 so-called themselves sport fans and 10 convicts, who just got out of the "PEN,"who's the oldest fart to win a major boxing title. Half of them told that they did know. The rest say that it was George Foreman or Evander "Bar-b-cue-sauseselling" Holyfield or Archie Moore. I'm like: "What da double fudge?" Only in San Diego, Cali, where I'm gettin' on my stay for a bit.

Maybe doing those push-ups between rounds, in the second bout with Pascual, is every making all the voting powers that be jealous or angry at da fellow old a$$. Holla!

ali says:

@amayseng I feel u....