

Hopkins Wants To Thrash King As Much As Cloud

Written by Bernard Fernandez
Monday, 25 February 2013 14:18



Try as he might, Bernard “The Executioner” Hopkins is finding it difficult to generate much animosity toward IBF light heavyweight champion Tavoris Cloud, whom he challenges in the HBO-televised main event March 9 at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Despite their 17-year age gap and decidedly different points of origin, Hopkins, 48, feels a certain kinship toward Cloud. It’s hard to work yourself into a frothing rage in preparation of a

Hopkins Wants To Thrash King As Much As Cloud

Written by Bernard Fernandez
Monday, 25 February 2013 14:18

fight with someone you sort of relate to.

“I heard this guy talking about his mom’s refrigerator being repossessed, about how they had to put their food in a washtub and fill it up with ice to keep it from spoiling,” Hopkins (*photo above by Hogan Photos*

), a child of poverty who grew up on the mean streets of North Philadelphia, said of Cloud, who hails from Tallahassee, Fla. “I’ve been watching that tape for a couple of months. I’m from North Philly, but I know where he’s coming from. He said he used to live in a room with 15 people, and he ain’t never going back to that again.

“I know how that is. That means my ass had better get ready for this guy because he’s hungry, too.”

And the roaches that presumably are a familiar sight to kids living in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions? Hopkins recalls times when he had to brush them off stale slices of bread, and those when he and other family members ate cold beans straight out of the can because the gas in their shabby apartment had been shut off.

“Oh, man, those were our buddies, as long as they didn’t take all of (the food),” Hopkins said of co-existing with vermin. “You expect them to be in there. You were sharing space with things with a lot of legs and people with two legs. Whoever got there first got to eat.”

But if Hopkins (52-6-2, 32 KOs) can’t find a legitimate reason to be mad at Cloud (24-0, 19 KOs), he has to be mad at *somebody*, because, well, that is how boxing’s ageless wonder has stayed at or near the top of an unforgiving profession when most fighters are long since retired and whiling away the hours in rocking chairs, not in gyms while getting ready for another tough bout. Fortunately for B-Hop, taking on Cloud – a victory would enable Hopkins to break his own record, set against Jean Pascal on May 21, 2011, of becoming the oldest man ever to win a widely recognized world title – provides him with just such a target for vengeance and retribution.

That would be Hopkins’ former promoter, Don King, who promotes Cloud.

Hopkins Wants To Thrash King As Much As Cloud

Written by Bernard Fernandez
Monday, 25 February 2013 14:18

“Cloud believes he is the best, that he can beat anybody,” Hopkins said. “I’m not surprised he took the fight. I am surprised King agreed to it because Cloud losing to me will shut down what’s left of King’s company. He’s pretty much down to Cloud. Cloud is Don King’s last big hope.

“Who would have thought that I would have stayed around long enough to destroy Don King? I started the process with Tito (Trinidad). Look, I made a history of beating Don King fighters. Robert Allen, John David Jackson, William Joppy, Keith Holmes, Trinidad. That’s five so far. There’s probably more.”

To Hopkins’ way of thinking – and this is a proud, obstinate guy who never forgets real or imagined slights – King became an enemy during the run-up to, and aftermath of, what likely was the ex-con from Philadelphia’s most important ring success, the 12th-round stoppage of the unbeaten and favored Trinidad on Sept. 29, 2001, in Madison Square Garden. His Hairness ostensibly promoted both fighters, but King’s continual waving of the Puerto Rican flag, and smiling shouts of “Viva, Puerto Rico!” left no doubt in Hopkins’ mind that his best interests were not exactly the promoter’s priority.

Then there was the matter of the newly created Sugar Ray Robinson Award, which was to be presented to the winner of the unified middleweight championship. Hopkins was the IBF and WBC 160-pound champion going in, Trinidad the WBA champ.

“They already had engraved Tito’s name on that thing,” recalled Hopkins, 3-1 underdog that night. “If he had won, they would have given it to him right there in the ring. I had to wait a week to get it.”

But Don King is hardly alone when it comes to inclusion on the list of the former promoters, managers and advisers who have raised Hopkins’ ire. Maybe it’s remnants of his five-year forced incarceration on an armed robbery conviction, but B-Hop – who, to his credit, has never run afoul of the law since his parole a quarter-century ago – does seem to have problems with certain authority figures. Just ask Dan Goossen and Lou DiBella, or examine transcripts of the profane rants toward Hopkins uttered by Butch Lewis, who passed away on July 23, 2011. All once had warm spots in their hearts for Hopkins which turned icy cold, and all engaged him in dueling lawsuits.

Hopkins Wants To Thrash King As Much As Cloud

Written by Bernard Fernandez
Monday, 25 February 2013 14:18

“I have a track record I’m proud of,” Lewis said when he was sued by Hopkins. “I’ve gone above and beyond the call of duty with every fighter I’ve ever had, in terms of contractual commitments. But I don’t want anybody to confuse my being a nice guy with weakness. I’m not going to let that (bleeper-bleeper) kick me in the ass and take it when I’m doing right.”

And there is this from Goossen, the president of now-defunct America Presents when it promoted Hopkins and was also involved in acrimonious legal action with the legendarily hard-to-satisfy boxer.

“One of my biggest disappointments in 20 years of boxing is Bernard Hopkins,” Goossen said in 2000 (Hopkins’ contract with America Presents expired on June 30, 1999) as the charges and counter-charges were being sorted by lawyers. “He’s right up there with Michael Nunn. I always felt Michael Nunn had the ability to be one of the greatest fighters ever, and I had the same feeling about Bernard. But Nunn never achieved greatness, based upon his own decisions, and it’s too late for him now.

“With Hopkins, who has greatness written all over him, it’s getting harder and harder to believe it’s ever going to happen. I wanted to have a good relationship with the guy and enjoy it, but, well, Bernard is Bernard. I’m not going to get into a war of words with Bernard Hopkins. I’m saddened by the direction he has taken in his career. I’m proud of what we were trying to do to advance that career. He wasn’t happy with what we did; we are.”

But perhaps the most bitter split involved Lou DiBella, the former senior vice president of HBO Sports who for a time served as Hopkins’ adviser. DiBella shed tears of joy the night Hopkins dispatched Trinidad, but the relationship took a nasty turn when Hopkins accused his onetime friend of extorting \$50,000 from him for a spot in an HBO-televised fight bout against Syd Vanderpool on May 13, 2000, in Indianapolis, Ind. Interestingly, that fight – Hopkins retained his IBF middleweight title on a clear-cut unanimous decision – took place 16½ months *before* B-Hop and DiBella expressed their undying love for one another in the glow of that big night in the Garden against Trinidad.

DiBella points out that he won a \$610,000 defamation judgment against Hopkins, who continued to loudly pronounce his contention that his version of what had transpired was correct. That led to a tense situation heading into the first meeting of Hopkins and Jermain Taylor, who was promoted by DiBella Entertainment. Taylor, on a razor-thin split decision, wrested the middleweight championship from Hopkins on July 16, 2005, in addition to ending

Hopkins Wants To Thrash King As Much As Cloud

Written by Bernard Fernandez
Monday, 25 February 2013 14:18

his division-record streak of 20 successful defenses.

“I’ve got a personal reason why I want to clock this guy (Taylor), but I got it under control. It ain’t reckless,” Hopkins said prior to the grudge match. “I take all fights personal, but this one’s extremely personal. It’s a fight that motivates me more than any fight I ever fought. In this fight, there’s no (attorneys raising) objections. There ain’t no (judges) presiding. I am the judge, the jury and the executioner. This is me being able to get my vindication (against DiBella).”

DiBella fired right back. “What he did hurt me in every way,” he said of Hopkins. “It hurt my family, hurt my marriage, hurt my career, hurt my business.

“Look, Bernard Hopkins is a Hall of Famer. He’s the best middleweight of his era. In my estimation, he’s one of the five best middleweights of all time. I’m not sure Marvin Hagler would have beaten him. But he is a vile human being. Inside the ring, he’s a genius. Outside the ring, he’s a hateful, lying person.”

To paraphrase Samuel L. Jackson in *Pulp Fiction*, allow Hopkins to retort against those he deems to have conspired against him.

“Yeah, I speak my mind,” Hopkins said when he was taking on Goossen in the courts. “I understand the politics of boxing and, in some people’s eyes, that makes me dangerous. But I can’t be bullied. Bully tactics don’t work on me. If you try to bully me, I fight back. Just because I can fight doesn’t mean I can’t think.

“How many stories have you heard about fighters who went broke? There are a lot of those. Now, how many stories have you heard about boxing promoter who went broke? There aren’t any. Promoters hold all the power, all the leverage and most of the money. That’s the way it’s always been. They’re not going to give up any of that power and leverage to any fighter, unless they absolutely have to.”

Leave it to each individual fan of the sport to determine who is right and who is wrong in these various disputes, or if there is a greater truth to be distilled from the succession of verbal wars

Hopkins Wants To Thrash King As Much As Cloud

Written by Bernard Fernandez
Monday, 25 February 2013 14:18

outside the ropes. Maybe there are shades of gray, as is frequently the case whenever absolute truths are not immediately evident and therefore open to interpretation.

What does seem clear is that Hopkins' rigid approach to the business of boxing is very much like his approach to the brutality of boxing, where a refusal to give ground is often – but not always – a plus.

Recently retired HBO ringside analyst Larry Merchant perhaps best summed up Hopkins, the fighter, in analyzing what had taken place in his 10th-round stoppage of No. 1 contender Antwun Echols in a foul-plagued brawl on Dec. 1, 2000.

“Gil Clancy once told me that, from a technical standpoint, today's fighters and those from the 1930s and '40s aren't that dissimilar,” Merchant told a reporter minutes after that fight. “But he said those old-time guys, a lot of whom came out of the Depression, were hard men. When I look at Bernard Hopkins, I see a hard man.”

He is, undoubtedly, a hard man to deal with. Even those who marvel at his longevity, at his ring smarts and his determination, can be left exasperated and enraged. Striking deals with Bernard Hopkins that satisfy both parties can be as difficult as getting Israel and Iran to play nice.

“I know when someone's trying to bum-rush me,” Hopkins said during another heated skirmish with a promoter. “Well, come on with it. I know about intimidation. I was taught it by Butch Lewis. The main thing I learned from Butch was this: Don't trust anyone. I don't trust anyone in boxing.”

Given Hopkins' history, his ongoing relationship with Golden Boy Promotions – he has held an executive position with the company since Nov. 20, 2004, just 32 days after he knocked out company president Oscar De La Hoya – is as or more noteworthy than his 20 winning middleweight defenses or his capturing world titles deep into his 40s. A lot of people are waiting, waiting for the association to blow up in the same rancorous manner what marked so many of B-Hop's previously ill-fated attempts at co-existence.

Hopkins Wants To Thrash King As Much As Cloud

Written by Bernard Fernandez
Monday, 25 February 2013 14:18

Even De La Hoya had harsh words prior to his ninth-round knockout by Hopkins on Sept. 18, 2004. “Hopkins is a bully. He talks about having been in prison and all this street stuff, and he thinks that’s going to intimidate me. But he’s wrong. He’s not going to win any battles before we get in the ring.”

For his part, Hopkins spoke about how he was going to rearrange De La Hoya’s matinee-idol mug. “Oscar has always been known for how handsome he is,” he said. “I’m envious of him. His nose is straight. Nobody’s really busted up Oscar. But for all of his fans who admire his Clark Gable looks, they’d better take their pictures of him now. It’s going to be one of those before-and-after deals after I get through with him.”

That De La Hoya and Hopkins should team up was quite the shock. Maybe it was De La Hoya’s way of showing appreciation that the takeout shot by Hopkins was a left hook to the liver, which did not oblige the losing fighter to seek the services of a plastic surgeon.

“Bernard Hopkins is one of the best fighters in recent history,” De La Hoya said when B-Hop joined Team Golden Boy. “His talent and skill in the ring are unquestioned, but what impressed me just as much is his charisma, vision for the future of boxing and deep love and respect for the sport.”

Hopkins, for his part, used the occasion to take a few shots at Bob Arum – who had just announced that his stepson, Todd duBoef, was taking over the day-to-day operations of Top Rank – and, yes, King.

“Perhaps Don King will get a whiff of this,” Hopkins said of the aging icons he hoped to remove from an entrenched position of power. “Those old dinosaurs will see that new, young blood is coming to town.”

There are those who would say that it’s Hopkins who is the last dinosaur. In any case, it’s likely he’ll be taking his last punch in the not-so-distant future. Cloud is a 3-1 favorite to be the guy to deliver that parting shot.

Hopkins Wants To Thrash King As Much As Cloud

Written by Bernard Fernandez
Monday, 25 February 2013 14:18

A lot of people will bid Hopkins, the living legend, a fond farewell then. And a lot of people will be saying goodbye, and good riddance, to Hopkins the legendary pain in the ass.

[Comment on this article](#)

deepwater says:

promoter= lying scum8ag. thats it. nothing more nothing less. dibella cryed tears of joy for \$\$\$ he thought he might grab. no hard feelings lou.

Bernie Campbell says:

Freakin Idiot, Could have been a hero and done alot of good if he took the high road with things! Instead he is a symbol of shame to his own people! No glory in indiscretion stanky!

stormcentre says:

Good read editor Mike.

admin says:

Bernard Fernandez's story about trashing Don King puts me in mind of a similar B-Hop rant, but his ire was directed at DiBella. B-Hop needs a [I]villain[/I] to fuel his fire. Check my TSS story about B-Hop's first presser with Jermain Taylor:

[URL]http://www.thesweetscience.com/article-archive/2005/2058-what-a-tangled-web-we-weave[/URL] ----Joe Rein

Bernie Campbell says:

Whats the point of Bernard Hopkins madness! I guess thats why people remember the name Judas Iscariot, He represents a spirit of negativity, no darn excuses, How far have we would have gone without those 30 pieces of silver! This idiots time has come, he is now seeking the noose!

stormcentre says:

OK, so Bernie is your view that Cloud will beat Hopkins; with the "noose" comments? .

Radam G says:

B Camp is just jivin' and connivin!' He just doesn't dig B-Hop. But B-Hop is gonna do some walking on that Cloud, like did on Roman water. And Peter could have too, if his bytch arse had faith. Hehehe! I pulling for the B-Hop to come out on top. Holla!

Hopkins Wants To Thrash King As Much As Cloud

Written by Bernard Fernandez
Monday, 25 February 2013 14:18

ArneK. says:

There was a time when I thought the "Executioner" was the most level-headed boxer to come down the pike since Gene Tunney. No more. A fellow who willingly takes blows to the head at the age of 48 isn't level-headed. For the record B-Hop has already boxed 458 rounds, vs. "only" 443 for Evander Holyfield (a poor comparison, I admit, as Holyfield has been in more wars against men who punch harder). One of the amazing things about Hopkins' career is that he lost his pro debut! Off the top of my head, the only other great champion I can think of to lose his pro debut was Benny Leonard, but Leonard was then only 15 years old. Who am I missing?

Radam G says:

The great, late Henry "Homicide Hank" Armstrong was KTFO in his pro debut, to name one. Depend on what you consider as "great," ArneK. You are missing a few more. Losing the first bout meant nothing. Especially way, way back in da day when the first pro fight was the first fight for a lot of great pros. Holla!

stormcentre says:

[QUOTE=admin;26154]Bernard Fernandez's story about trashing Don King puts me in mind of a similar B-Hop rant, but his ire was directed at DiBella. B-Hop needs a [I]villain[/I] to fuel his fire. Check my TSS story about B-Hop's first presser with Jermain Taylor:
[URL]http://www.thesweetscience.com/article-archive/2005/2058-what-a-tangled-web-we-weave[/URL] ----Joe Rein[/QUOTE]

Agreed, that's also a very good read. I had read it when 1st published, but forgot until I reread after your link. Cheers.

Bernie Campbell says:

Radam my man, youve got to get your facts straight; not Roman water, Jewish Water, straight from Israel boy, The Sea of Galilea! Just goes to show you all you Friscoes got short on education, Mustive been too much video games!

Radam G says:

C'mon, B-Camp! The Romans were the rulers of Jewish terrain at those times. There was no Israel until the 1940s. Historic manufacturing is distorting of the struggles that Jews faced and face. That is why muthasuckas be friscoeing the BobFather. Holla!