

Jeff Lacy Explains The Comeback

Written by Michael Woods

Tuesday, 26 November 2013 10:52



I apologize to Jeff Lacy as we are to begin a chat on the phone, to discuss his comeback to the ring after a three year absence.

"Jeff, I'm sorry," I tell the 36-year-old hitter who last gloved up on Dec. 11, 2010, losing (UD12) to 23-19 Dhafir Smith. "If you hear some noise in the background, it's the TV, I have my girls here watching a program. It's not me watching a cartoon."

The Florida resident chuckles, deeply. "I got my two little boys here, me too," he says.

In fact, over the course of the conversation, in which I tried to discern why the 25-4 hitter nicknamed "Left Hook," who held a 168 pound crown in 2004-2005, was returning to the squared circle, both of us had to fend off queries and requests from the little ones. But we persevered...

Lacy (*seen in photo by Hogan Photos, in 2008*) told me he took the time off for a few reasons. First and foremost, he says, he has been concentrating on being a present father to the 3 year old and the 2 year old boys. So, that's been a full-time job? "One hundred percent," he tells me. "Stay at home. I'm a proud father."

So, is he coming back to battle Martin Verdin (20-16-2) at the Belle of Baton Rouge in Louisiana on Saturday, Nov. 30 because he is now re-charged? "I would say focused on one thing, not re-charged," he says. "My focus is now one hundred percent."

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A bum shoulder had hampered him severely, he says, and contributed mightily to his level of effectiveness in later years. Lacy dropped decisions to Jermain Taylor in 2008, Roy Jones in 2009 and then the journeyman Smith in 2010, and it was clear that he wasn't near-enough to his peak self, when he had fans and media salivating over his frame and his potential to be a player in the title mix.

The left shoulder started really being a detractor back in 2006, when he tore the rotator cuff during a fight with Vitali Tsypko, and had to have surgery. That capped off a pretty darned horrid year, which was "topped" by a unanimous decision loss to Joe Calzaghe in England on March 4. Calzaghe was 40-0, but the naysayers said he had feasted on home cooking, and many felt Lacy would be the man to show the world that the Welshman was just another overrated Euro. Lacy entered at 21-0. He had that sculpted physique which promised so much, seduced rooters who felt jilted when the effort didn't match the packaging..and he left the ring a changed man, one who had to endure pointed putdowns by media and fans alike, who mocked his showing against Calzaghe, to the extent that you wondered if they'd all put money on him and had their wallets hurt by the result. It was often pretty nasty, wasn't it? "It wasn't cool," Lacy allows.

The 2000 US Olympian Lacy tried and sometimes succeeded in shrugging off the critiques, and scored wins over Tsypko, Peter Manfredo in 2007 and Epifanio Mendoza in July 2008. Then came the start of the slide, against Taylor. That slide morphed into far more dark territory in January 2011, when Lacy's older brother Hydra Lacy Jr., age 39, engaged in a shootout with law enforcement in St. Petersburg, Fla., where Jeff still resides.

Two police officers were killed in the bullet-storm, and Hydra Lacy also perished.

Jeff Lacy doesn't pretend that incident is fully in the past, dealt with and ancient history. He pauses when I go there, and works to formulate how that experience affected him, and still does. "You have to know me....you have issues with family, it bothers you. Of course...I'm a very mental person. I wish I could go back do and say some things different but we can't. That whole ordeal, I see both sides, the families of those officers. I'm a father now, I have a different connection to kids."

The slain policemen, Jeffrey Yaslowitz and Sgt. Thomas Baitinger, were family men. Yaslowitz was married, with three children. Baitinger was married, no kids. "I come home to see my kids, I miss my kids when I'm not with them," Lacy continues. "The situation happened, I'm not placing blame on no one, we all hurt. But kids are so pure in this life."

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I don't press, I don't wish to poke into wounds that are still present, likely fading some with the passage of time, but certain to always leave scarring on everyone involved. But the minutes spent re-visiting that horrific time period reminds me that while fighters often exhibit super-heroic feats in the ring, shrug off cuts and broken bones in combat, they are prone to being stung by emotional strikes as much as the next guy. So, when guys like me rag on a Lacy, label him a bust, dismiss his career as a disappointment, it's really only fair if we try to present the whole picture.

So, what is the plan, near-term and long? Is Lacy looking to do two or three fights, then target a name at 168? Maybe looking at Andre Ward down the line?

"I'm not looking at any title," he says. "My vision is to get the cobwebs off me. And what's left? To be honest, I feel I'm a late starter. I'm gonna shock the world. In this "vacation" I discovered the skill of boxing. I was using just my talent, but I didn't know how to use it."

Lacy doesn't want to get too deep into specifics, he says he wants to show the people in the ring, walk the walk rather than talk. "It's all about show it that night," he says. "This next chapter is all about judge me for what you see, not what you think."

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Radam G says:

Nice witty, human-interest copy.

I wish "Left hook" the best. Favoring the left hand is boss. The left hand rocks! Hehe! Holla!

kidcanvas says:

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the story was good till i got to the "im not placing blame on nobody" referring to the cop killing brother of his . moron... ull get whats coming in a few fights ...