

## The Night Bernard Hopkins Won the Middleweight Title

Written by Aaron Tallent  
Tuesday, 15 April 2014 08:47

---



Bernard Hopkins is a Philadelphia fighter, but has a special history with Washington, D.C. When he announced his upcoming light heavyweight title unification bout with Belbut Shumenov, taking place at the D.C. Armory on Saturday, April 19, Hopkins alluded to his experiences fighting in the District.

“Here in D.C. you're only as good as your last vote,” said Hopkins. “At the end of the day, I've realized that you can be a champion yesterday, but if you dwell on yesterday you will never go forward.”

To be fighting at his level at 49, not focusing on the past is key, but Hopkins has had to take that approach since his first bout in D.C. That was, of course, when he lost a unanimous decision and the vacant IBF Middleweight title to Roy Jones, Jr., at RFK Stadium in May of 1993. Little did Hopkins know that he win that same belt in the D.C. area less than two years later.

After the loss to Jones, Hopkins won his next four bouts, and earned the No. 1 IBF ranking, which enabled him to fight for the open belt. Jones had vacated it to move up to Super Middleweight so Hopkins faced Segundo Mercado for the belt in front of his native crowd in Quito, Ecuador, on December 17, 1994.

The bout did not start well for Hopkins, as he found himself open to Mercado's uppercuts. In the fifth round, Mercado sent him to the canvas for the first time in his career and then did it again in the seventh round. Hopkins won the later rounds and managed to escape with a draw.

## The Night Bernard Hopkins Won the Middleweight Title

Written by Aaron Tallent  
Tuesday, 15 April 2014 08:47

---

On the undercard, Simon Brown knocked out Frank Newton, which earned him a shot at Baltimore native Vincent Pettway's IBF Light Middleweight title. The two signed to meet on April 29, 1995, at the USAir Arena in Landover, Md., a D.C. suburb (Pettway won with a sixth-round knockout). A Hopkins/Mercado rematch was also added increase to the interest in the card that would also air on Showtime.

In this bout, Hopkins attacked early, using his right hand to land big punches in the third, fourth and fifth rounds, and avoided Mercado's uppercuts. In the seventh round, he had Mercado against the ropes when referee Rudy Battle examined the Ecuadoran fighter and stopped the bout.

"I wanted to get him out early," Hopkins said after the bout. "The right hand was key tonight. Being aggressive was also important."

Following the win, Hopkins collapsed onto the canvas in relief and celebration. Not only had he finally secured the belt that had eluded for almost two years, he had become the first Philadelphian to win a middleweight title,

"It'll be twice as nice going [into the ring] and being introduced as the new world middleweight champion, the first from Philadelphia, that's right, North Philadelphia!" said Hopkins.

After the bout, Hopkins resumed his training regimen and watched his bout with Mercado to look for areas where he could improve. His legendary promoter, the late Butch Lewis, told reporters that he had a special fighter.

"Bernard Hopkins is not only a fine professional boxer, but he knows what it takes to make it in this sport," he said.

Lewis was prime judge of talent, but it is doubtful that he knew how prophetic his words would be. Hopkins went on to defend the middleweight title a record 20 times (Mercado proceeded to

## The Night Bernard Hopkins Won the Middleweight Title

Written by Aaron Tallent  
Tuesday, 15 April 2014 08:47

---

lose seven of his next nine bouts so a rubber match between the two never happened.). He has also won the light heavyweight belt twice and his dominance in the ring in his late 40s may be the greatest age-defying effort in the history of sports.

Whatever the outcome of his bout with Shumenov may be, fans will see a fighter who never stopped improving his game no matter his age or greatness.

[WATCH RELATED VIDEOS ON BOXINGCHANNEL.TV](#)

[Comment on this article](#)

### **The Commish says:**

Over the years, I have watched most aging fighters with a tinge of sadness, knowing I will be watching a shell of their once-great boxing ability and athletic prowess. Nothing was ever sadder than watching the decline and struggle of Muhammad Ali.

Even veteran reporters were teary-eyed when they watched Ali take a fearsome pounding against Larry Holmes in October 1980. Sitting near all-time great Sugar Ray Robinson, I later asked the legendary old champ what he thought of while watching Ali.

"It kind of reminded me of myself in my last few fights," said the then-58-year-old Hall-of-Famer. "I thought I still had it, when in fact, I didn't. It hurt watching Ali in there tonight. It really hurt."

That's why it's so special watching Bernard Hopkins perform. As he closes in on his 50th birthday, he still fights at the highest of levels. We know it can't be like that forever. Maybe this Saturday, against Beibut Shumenov, he will show every one of his 49+ years. If not Saturday, then in his next fight, which will probably be against Adonis Stevenson. If not Stevenson, then in his fight after that. It has to happen. It happens to all the legends who overstay their welcome. It happened to Ali...to Joe Frazier...to Sugar Ray Leonard...to Joe Louis...and to countless other boxing immortals.

When that night finally happens to Hopkins, I won't say "I told you so." Hey, we knew it was going to happen. We just didn't know when. But until that night, like so many other nights in the past, we can sit back and enjoy the legend of Bernard Hopkins, and marvel at the skills that will one day carry him on his first year of eligibility into the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

Bernard Hopkins. Enjoy him while you can. There will never be another like him.

## The Night Bernard Hopkins Won the Middleweight Title

Written by Aaron Tallent  
Tuesday, 15 April 2014 08:47

---

-Randy G.

### **brownsugar says:**

Bernard used to put me off with his incessant litanies of grief which he enjoyed dumping on the media and public alike... His fights with Calzaghe and Jones were nigh unwatchable. But something has happened to Bhop over the last several years and he seems to have been transformed into this distinguished ambassador for boxing outside of the ring and a threat to anyone inside the ring except for the 1 or 2 elite fighters in his weight class.

If he does the impossible by beating Shumenov, Stevensen, and Kovalev, it would be an achievement worthy of the highest praise in boxing.

### **Grimm says:**

[QUOTE=The Commish;49325]Bernard Hopkins. Enjoy him while you can. There will never be another like him.[/QUOTE]

Well said, sir. It is a privilege to see history - and what already is a historical fighter - take place in front of our eyes.

### **Skibbz says:**

Shumenov is athletic, intelligent and he has a nice punch. What he lacks is what Bernard has in abundance.. Experience. That's the factor I believe will have Bernard edging his way to a victory. I think the key will be to go to the body and take the Kazakh's motor from him. He's got good legs, but once they're gone he's going to be stuck in front of Bernard with no legs to carry him away... Just where Hopkins would want him I presume.

I hope he wins, it'll be one massive fight should he take on Stevenson soon after. Bernard is a legend still adding chapters to his phenomenal story.

### **The Shadow says:**

[QUOTE=Grimm;49352]Well said, sir. It is a privilege to see history - and what already is a historical fighter - take place in front of our eyes.[/QUOTE]

Indeed it is.

### **the Roast says:**

I remember all of the fights from the article. Hopkins did enough to win that fight with Mercado despite the two knockdowns and was ripped off. The most memorable fight of all mentioned here was the Pettway-Brown fight. Anyone who saw the end will never forget it. Brown was knocked out on the canvas and his arms were still punching. It's probably on youtube. One of the most eerie things you will ever see in a boxing match.

## The Night Bernard Hopkins Won the Middleweight Title

Written by Aaron Tallent  
Tuesday, 15 April 2014 08:47

---

### **The Shadow says:**

[QUOTE=the Roast;49408]I remember all of the fights from the article. Hopkins did enough to win that fight with Mercado despite the two knockdowns and was ripped off. The most memorable fight of all mentioned here was the Pettway-Brown fight. Anyone who saw the end will never forget it. Brown was knocked out on the canvas and his arms were still punching. It's probably on youtube. One of the most eerie things you will ever see in a boxing match.[/QUOTE]

It is also, disturbingly enough, one of the most legendarily comedic clips on YouTube as well.

### **The Commish says:**

I was ringside for that fight. I have see guys twitch and shake, but have never seen a KO'd fighter, stretched on his back, throwing punches at the ceiling. All of us in the ringside press area were wide-eyed as we watched the KO'd Brown still fighting.

-Randy G.

### **The Shadow says:**

Fringe-belt legitimization aside, this is an excellent piece on Hopkins:  
[url]http://sports.yahoo.com/news/despite-all-he-s-accomplished--49-year-old-bernard-hopkins-r-emains-underappreciated-210117879.html?soc\_src=mediacontentstory