

James Toney Is Back, Buddy McGirt's Got Him

Written by David A. Avila

Wednesday, 09 February 2011 00:16

It was early Friday morning as we walked into a busy Burbank fitness club and saw 12-time world champion James "Lights Out" Toney writhing in pain as a bone and joint therapist twisted and turned the boxing legend's joints and limbs.

"Arrrgh," were Toney's first words as he lay on the stretching table and looked up to acknowledge our presence. "He's killing me."

Toney's getting ready for a return to the boxing ring and to defend the IBA heavyweight title against Damon Reed (45-14, 32 KOs) in a 12-round bout at San Manuel Casino on Feb. 24. The last time Toney stepped in a ring was 17 months ago when he knocked out Matt Greer in two rounds.

"I got to get back in shape," said Toney (72-6-3, 44 KOs) after the grueling stretch session by Dan Holbert, a fitness trainer who works with NFL players too. "I need to lose weight."

The former junior middleweight, middleweight, super middleweight, cruiserweight and current IBA heavyweight world champion is working feverishly to get into fighting shape. That includes training sessions in the morning and evening and sparring sessions during the afternoon.

On this particular Friday afternoon Toney walked into famed trainer James "Buddy" McGirt's new gym in West Los Angeles; he indicated to me they will now work together.

"We'll work something out," said McGirt, who was formerly in Florida where he built a large roster of fighters to train.

Immediately Toney was in the boxing ring sparring with one of McGirt's fighters, a Cuban cruiserweight whose name nobody seemed to know. Both traded blows as the taller and slender boxer stepped in and out careful not to receive one of Toney's patented counters.

After several rounds of sparring the session was over. Toney asked McGirt what he wanted him to do and the trainer pointed toward the heavy bag.

"I don't do heavy bags," exclaimed Toney, 42. "Heavy bags don't hit back."

Everybody laughed. Good point.

McGirt nodded and kind of laughed at Toney's boxing philosophy.

"You know we could have fought each other if you moved up one division," said Toney to McGirt, laughing. "I would have whipped your ass."

"You couldn't have beat me," said McGirt. "Maybe in Michigan, even then you would have got a

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split decision.”

The whole gym erupted in laughter. Even Toney got a good laugh at that one.

Toney and McGirt will be teaming up; two ring legends with enough experience to fill their own boxing encyclopedia. But will it work?

McGirt said working with Toney should be easy because of his vast experience as a fighter. Aside from a few things here and there he sees no problems other than getting Toney in fighting shape.

“He hasn’t fought in a year and a half,” McGirt said. “He’s a little rusty.”

Long sabbaticals have been a constant problem for Toney, whose skills and experience tend to scare off opponents looking to grab a heavyweight shot. One thing that’s clear is when he weighs less than 220 he’s a dangerous heavyweight. Knockout wins over Greer and Evander Holyfield came at 217 pounds.

Toney’s last actual prize fight took place in mixed martial art’s Octagon when he fought former MMA heavyweight champion Randy “The Natural” Couture and lost this past summer.

“I made a mistake and he took advantage of it. Lost by a heel hook,” said Toney about the submission loss in UFC. “I asked him to fight me in my world like I fought him in his world. But he don’t want to take it. That’s OK.”

Recently there was banter between Quinton “Rampage” Jackson and Toney. Words were heated and it looked like something might come of it.

“I think Dana White made him cool it,” says Toney. “I haven’t heard anything in a while. Rampage aint talking no more.”

For 10 months Toney invested all of his time working on MMA. Now he’s back in a boxing ring and anxious to fight and defend the IBA title.

“I never left boxing,” said Toney, who sparred on Friday in West L.A. at McGirt’s gym. “I’m defending the IBA title. People say it’s not a well-known title but the title don’t make the fighter, the fighter makes the title.”

The for certain Hall of Fame prizefighter is continuing his run to fight the best heavyweights in the world, including Riverside’s Chris “The Nightmare” Arreola. A win over Reed could propel a showdown between the two marquee heavyweights.

“The Klitschko sisters don’t want to fight me and that other so-called champion David Haye is a clown,” says Toney.

One thing is certain with Toney, when he’s around boxing is a little more interesting.

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"He's back in boxing where he belongs," McGirt said.

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FighterforJC says:

Toney must've been hit harder by Couture than it looked. Toney lost by arm triangle choke, not a heel hook. I guess if you're halfway unconscious you wouldn't remember either.

Emaiguebagree says:

maybe, maybe

Robert Curtis says:

I'm going out to San Manuel to see this one. Hope Toney's closer to 220 than usual.

Radam G says:

I won't be going to San Manuel. James "Lights out" Toney doesn't even have a candle on nowadays. I don't even think that his shadow comes out anymore. Its retired from boxing ahead of JT's strong mind. No jive! Lol! Holla!

Isaiah says:

How does Toney have an IBA belt? He hasn't boxed in a year and a half right? Oh wait, I think I remember workers handing those belts out at Walmart. With that and \$5 dollars, I can buy myself a good cup of coffee. Don't worry Toney. The Klitschko brothers may yet fight you since a couple of so called worthy opponents are running for their lives. Just don't give us any excuses like your age and weight after you get knocked out. Speaking of someone ducking the Klitschko brothers, maybe David Haye will fight Toney since ole "lights out" is the perfect age and level of boxing inactivity for Haye to fight a name opponent. Do the world a favor James and knock chicken Haye out, would you?

brownsugar says:

to me Toney is more unbearable to watch than Ques Oqendo, Roy Jones, Junior Witter, John Riuz, and 75% of the MMA roster. The thought of seeing Toney in the ring again horrifies me.

FighterforJC says:

Toney worked on MMA for 10 months? LOL. He didn't work on MMA for 10 minutes! I was definitely among those who were fooled that Toney actually took MMA seriously. He's just fat and lazy. I don't think he did it just for the quick buck, but he genuinely believed that his boxing

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skills alone were more than enough to bust the "myth" that is MMA. He was pathetic, absolutely pathetic against Couture. Nobody even taught him how to tap. Toney is the only one doing all this "flailing" in MMA. lol.