

CARL FROCH: "I'm No Jean Pascal, Glen Johnson Is No Bernard Hopkins"...WOODS

Written by Michael Woods
Tuesday, 31 May 2011 15:59



I have yet to meet the man, woman or child not directly affiliated with the Glen Johnson camp who thinks that Glen Johnson will beat Carl Froch in the Super Six semifinal match on Saturday in Atlantic City.

Johnson's trainer has predicted a kayo win, saying, "For us, Froch will be an easy fight. The fight won't go the distance. Glen will win by KO. I'm sure of it."

But apart from that, I'm not sensing a tremendous groundswell for the guy who will turn 43 in January, not even after we saw him turn in a shockingly good performance last November against Allan Green, not even though we saw Bernard Hopkins strike a blow for the old guys against Jean Pascal on May 21.

Well, I'm not going against the grain here. I'll not be tabbing the graybeard to get the better of the 33-year-old Nottingham, England resident, who will be defending his WBC 168 pound title in AC. And I'm sorry to inform Johnson of this, if he was hoping to get a report that Froch seems to be looking past him to a fall finale against Andre Ward, but I didn't get the sense as I watched Froch work out at the Mendez Gym in Manhattan on Tuesday afternoon that he's overconfident. I didn't see an overly relaxed Froch in a mood too light for the task at hand, which most all figure to be reasonably arduous. Indeed, he told me that he really hasn't enjoyed his two week stay in NYC, as he cited an excess of people and cars and hubbub, which compares unfavorably to his homebase in Nottingham.

"I'm not really a city guy," he told TSS after a light, get-the-blood-flowing workout."

No, Froch came off as suitably snarly, with his game face affixed. When asked if he might take the 42-year-old Jamaican a tad too lightly, he shot down that notion. "I'm the consummate professional," he said. "I'm too professional for that." His April 2010 loss to Mikkel Kessler, he said, stripped away some patterns that kept him from being his best, and he looks back at that outing (UD12 loss, by scores of 113-115, 112-116, 111-117) as a "kick in the a**."

"I cut corners a little," he said. "Now there's no complacency. There's no room for complacency."

Obvious stuff maybe, but you could understand if the guy wasn't quivering at fighting the man with 14 losses, a fighter who maybe just maybe is getting too much love from pundits who

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maybe just maybe were over-impressed with a showing against Allan Green, who all due respect is something of an underachiever.

Froch figures Johnson will be amped up to be his very best, knowing he'll make a tidy bundle if he makes it to the Super Six final, and with the May 21 vision of 46 year-old marvel Bernard Hopkins fresh in his mind.

"But he's no Bernard Hopkins, and I'm no Jean Pascal," Froch said. You'll recall that Froch has good reason to say this with some conviction; he fought and beat Pascal in December 2008 (UD12) with the vacant WBC super middleweight crown up for grabs. "I expect Johnson to be strong, tough, to be coming forward, and to be beatable. I expect another loss for him."

His trainer of ten years, Robert McCracken, a solid pro who retired in 2001 with a 33-2 mark, told me Froch is in the right frame of mind and of sound body four days before the AC tussle. "He's short tempered the way he needs to be," McCracken said.

The trainer said a few details were attended to after the Kessler fight, stuff that bubbled up a couple bouts after he won that title against Pascal. The ex boxer is confident that Froch wouldn't get suckered into looking at Johnson as a faded shell, but just to be safe, he has hammered home that Johnson is a good puncher, that the test will not be an easy one. "Carl has to make Johnson miss, and counter him," he said. He expects Johnson to start strong, but then fade in the face of Froch's jab, and right hand.

No, McCracken isn't foreseeing a stoppage win, which makes sense, since Johnson hasn't been stopped early since 1997 (!), when Bernard Hopkins got him out via TKO in round eleven of their meetup. The fighter and the trainer are of the same mind, that Froch's style is exciting in and of itself, but that he doesn't need to go out of his way to impress anybody by going for the flashy early stop. "I don't want Carl to take a silly chance, or take a silly shot," said McCracken on his 43rd birthday. (He told me he'd do nothing to celebrate it, not til after the fight. The trainer mistakenly told me he was 42, then caught himself, and remembered it was his birthday!)

Us keyboard tappers like to try and cover as many angles as we can, so many of us are looking around the bend, at a Andre Ward-Froch finale. Barring any injuries or unforeseen snags, that will take place in October or November, with LA, Vegas and New York the top three locations as of now. McCracken said his guy would be well equipped to hand the 24-0 Ward his first loss as a pro.

"Ward is good, not great, fighter," McCracken told me. "He's beatable. There isn't a fighter in boxing who isn't beatable."

We talked about about how fighters are entertainers, how they need to entertain fans, or risk having a meager fan base, and subpar earning power from the people in position to make them rich...or not. "Fighters need to entertain," McCracken said, simply. "It's the best sport in the world. We need to get more people watching it. We need to get a few more skilled fighters to be exciting, to take a chance."

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Ward has a style that isn't universally embraced. He seems to appeal to those who appreciate the subtleties, the nuances, of the sport. He seeks to not get hit, at times, before he seeks to deliver a blow, and isn't afraid to clutch and grab to stymie a foe's flow if need be. Could he get Froch into that mode, the trainer was asked.

"Froch is the rare guy who can fight, and box," the trainer said. "He's difficult to train for and adapt to. Froch would fight his own fight."

McCracken was asked if Ward would be the best boxer Froch will have faced, if if if, I must stress the if, it would be rude to look past Johnson, if the Brit gets past the Jamaican.

"I don't know," he said. "He fought a fresh Jermain Taylor, Pascal, Dirrell...We'll find out how good Ward is. No one knows yet. Maybe likewise with Carl...."

SPEEDBAG Gym proprietor Francisco Mendez is a budding mogul. He actually owns three gyms in Manhattan, and if you are at all familiar with rents in NYC, you must tip your cap to the guy. The Harlem resident, age 52, has Mendez gyms at 251 Fifth Ave. (at 28th St.), and at 25 West 26th St, with a new, spacious (8,500 square feet) facility due to open next month, at 23 East 26th St. The gyms mostly cater to the white collar crowd, and amateurs. I figure giving the Puebla, Mexico native a plug is the least I can do; he helps the local economy to the tune of over 40Gs a month in rents, so if you're near the area, head over and get in shape! Also, he was savvy enough to turn the air conditioning on for us keyboard tappers and webguys and photogs, so he deserves some good karma in return.

---Froch talked about how his Polish blood is responsible for him being able to keep weight off. Bless his soul. Why oh why don't have more Polish stock in me?! Froch said he ate a hearty breakfast and lunch, and was 170 on the dot.

--- The long awaited statue of the late International Boxing Federation (IBF) lightweight champion Leavander Johnson, created by world renowned sculptor and New Jersey native, Brian Hanlon, is now complete and will be unveiled during a ceremony at Center City Park in Atlantic City, New Jersey on June 4, 2011. The Park is located on Atlantic Avenue between North Carolina and South Carolina Avenues. The Ceremony will begin promptly at 11am. Johnson, an Atlantic City native son and hero, will be immortalized forever in the heart of his hometown where he will be an inspiration and a constant reminder that "You too can achieve your dream." The unveiling ceremony is open to the general public and residents of Atlantic City and surrounding communities are encouraged to attend the event. Johnson lost his life on Sept. 22, 2005 after he contracted a subdural hematoma in a Sept. 17 title defense against Jesus Chavez in Las Vegas.

WOODS ON TWITTER <http://twitter.com/#!/Woodsy1069>

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Real Talk says:

4 days left heh heh heh heh. Yeah he Ko'd Allen Green....and Roy Jones. Let's not forget he went toe to toe with the monster Tavoris Thunder Cloud and gave him a boxing lesson...almost ruined him. Question....didn't Jaun Ma just get stopped by a guy with 13 losses? When your matched tough and not protected those things happen. Not to mention when you fight on the other fighters home turf whose the promoters guy you tend to get robbed...LOL hence the name the Road Warrior. We all know the record doesn't make the fighter. Froch trainer makes a couple good points but I think Glenn's trainer see's what I see. If Froch doesn't get respect with his power he's gettiing KO'd. Johnson KO. Dueces

amayseng says:

I'm with real talk. I don't see the unathletic
And slow froch being able to stay away from
Glens pressure. Froch got beat by dirrel,
Kessler and was out boxed losing 10 rounds
to a shot and ruined Taylor.
Froch has little skill and will be exposed

This is no one dimensional AA

the Roast says:

I'm not with you guys at all. Froch has good but awkward skills. He's gonna box and move on the old timer all night. Sure Glen will corner him once in a while and they will exchange punches but the faster Froch will win most of the exchanges. I thought Froch won that fight with Kessler. That was Taylor's last stand. JT fought a good fight until he got caught late. AA got the shot JT. I dont remember the Dirrell fight. What happened to that kid? I hope they show Rachel about 15-20 times. Just keep the mic awat from her. Shes a screamer.

brownsugar says:

Carl is savvy enough to win...plus he always comes in tip-top shape..Glens' legs looked stiff against. Green ... Froch has the potential to pull this out

mortcola says:

Froch is better than I originally gave him credit for. His strength, so far, apart from his come from behind win over Taylor, has amounted to messing up the rhythm of more technical and/or mechanical fighters, and using that gangly reach effectively. Although he might out-land Johnson, he is simply not a sharp enough boxer to dissuade Johnson's steady pressure assault. He is going to get banged around, and he will only win if he manages to tire Johnson into becoming sloppy. Its a pick-em fight for me.

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brownsugar says:

Ditto Mortcola this should be worth the weight. I mean wait.

Radam G says:

If Froch's secret weapon -- his fine-arse girlfriend -- is not gettin her screaming and beaming on, the "Road Warrior" is gonna run Froch into a ditch, take a broom, pretend he is a Carribean wicked witch and beat him like a b**ch! I just thought that I would get on my rhyme, because Froch is ready for the taking. Da sucka ain't a dime. Hehehe! Holla!