

## Big Bear Camp Was Eventful For Tavoris Cloud

Written by The Sweet Science  
Saturday, 02 March 2013 20:38

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Undefeated light heavyweight champion Tavoris "Thunder" Cloud (24-0, 19 KOs) took his last run this morning in Big Bear Lake, Calif., prior to departing for Brooklyn, N.Y., to make his fifth title defense on March 9 at Barclays Center against future Hall of Famer Bernard "The Executioner" Hopkins (52-6-2, 32 KOs). (HBO, 9:30 p.m. ET/PT)

Cloud is shown here in front of the beautiful Bear Mountain Ski Resort.

Cloud, from Tallahassee, Fla., and his new trainer Abel Sanchez faced a number of challenges at their high-altitude training camp perched in the mountains east of Los Angeles. They braved a bitterly cold January followed by heavy snowfall that Cloud noted "was beautiful."

February brought on what Cloud said "was not a good time to be a black man in Big Bear," when an intense California-wide manhunt lead police to Cloud's scenic mountain oasis in

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search of former Los Angeles Police Department cop Christopher Dorner--a fugitive with a \$1 million bounty on his head after being suspected of going on a killing spree--whose truck was found in the snow-covered woods near Big Bear Lake.

Police got into a gunfight with the outlaw on Glass Road in the Big Bear area before subsequently burning a cabin where he had holed up on Feb. 12.

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### **stormcentre says:**

Wonder how he fared with GGG? Did he get busted up? Or did GGG take it easy on him so he doesn't face B-Hop feeling a little gun shy?

### **amayseng says:**

that is kinda crazy that Dorner was out that way, it had to be a few worrisome days for Cloud and everyone really in the area with that guy on the loose.

i am intrigued to see how much bernard has left.

i wouldnt base his fight against chad on anything currently, chad was the worst matchup for bernard in this last chapter,

if the bernard that fought pascal shows up we may have yet another record, with bernard riding off into the sunset....

### **brownsugar says:**

The grim, and dutiful Cloud will be coming at Bhop like a crazed ex-LA Cop with a vendetta, It'll be interesting to see if Bhop can survive the assault or if Cloud will burn himself out in blaze of glory during the championship rounds... Or will Clouds defense be like a fortified, fireproof, Cabin in the Woods?... Cloud finally gets his wish. Now lets see what he can do with the opportunity.

Bernard won't be moving around the ring like Yusef Mack... I think there's a good chance of Cloud outworking Bhop.

Isn't it ironic that Dorn looks like a chubby LL Cool J? it's also tragic that so many lives had to be lost before this lunatic finally met his death by being consumed in hellfire created by incendiary tear gas.... It's hard to imagine that Big Bear will ever be the same again. My condolences go out to the families of the survivors.

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### **Radam G says:**

If Tavoris was lightning, instead of a "Thunder" Cloud, he may would put some fright in old B-Hop and the wise, old Genie Naazim.

Thunder is just nature farting and clapping. No funky fart and noisy clapping will bother B-Hop a bit. In da pen, he went through all types of syet. So he has had a serious sniff of whuppin' an arse and throwing it over the cliff.

And Genie Naazim always has some type of trick. He may hit the Thunder Cloud with an invisible brick. The Genie has something in mind. Don't be surprised how flicking easily B-Hop whups Cloud's behind. Holla!

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### **Radam G says:**

B-Hop will probably whup him up badly. I don't know about stopping him. Holla!

### **stormcentre says:**

Looking at Cloud's last 6 or so fights – or even going back further - it's hard to see that he has the experience with top notch guys that you would expect would be required to perform well against a crafty veteran that knows every trick in the book; like Hopkins.

Could be wrong, but from what I can see the best guys Clouds recently been in with are; Julio Cesar Gonzales, Clinton Wood, Yusaf Mack and Glen Johnson.

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(Digression; on Cloud's fight with Glen Johnson, I have no idea how Glen managed to stay on his feet with Cloud during some of the heated exchanges in their fight when Cloud seriously loaded up on him - but to Johnson's credit, he did).

That said, if experience with top-notch guys was all it was about; then maybe the unfortunate Dib would still be champion now.

The flip side to that is, of course (even aside from the fact that Gradovich or Dib is no Hopkins) if you're in with B-Hop and you haven't seen a lot of styles, feints, footwork and other misdirection, and tricks, and your mental stamina is such that you can't always think on the move (in every sense of the term) and/or have never had to before; then it's very possible that you may just make it all the more easy for Hopkins and his repertoire of sneaky tricks, to put you off even more and steal the show.

The up-side for Tavoris is that he does look incredibly strong, durable and ready. But then so did Pascal, Pavlik, Echols, Tarver and Wright.

More up-side; Tavoris also seems to have a pretty well rounded set of skills and also good punch variation, but without the ability to vary power for the purposes of balance and stamina preservation and also economy of motion (which are advanced techniques both Mayweather and Tszyu had down pat, with Mayweather probably better at it whilst, in all probability, he didn't have as much power to modulate as Kostya).

Cloud sometimes even effectively uses the shoulder roll and then snaps back with a sneaky powerful right hand, occasionally even followed up by a left hook. He did this a few times with success against Clinton Woods and in the above-mentioned Johnson fight. It will be interesting to see whether Cloud does that against Hopkins (old skool to old skool, so to speak) who - coincidentally whilst winning against someone that arguably represents the best replica of Cloud that Hopkins' opponent list has - was, perhaps tellingly, still not confident enough to fight Pascal without using several questionable techniques that were probably not within the auspices of the relevant rules and guidelines.

What's new, I suppose anyone could say?

After all Hopkins almost always manages to evade culpability for these "accidental" infringements (in a similar fashion to how Floyd Jr. rarely gets warned during his big fights. Such as when Mayweather repeatedly held Cotto's right arm during rounds 8, 9 and 10 when Cotto came on very strongly, and also during others, of their fight. Or even how, during the Hatton fight, Floyd's elbow was employed for curious purposes that were as beneficial as they were obvious and unattended to. Perhaps, in the case of Floyd, he is allowed to continue where the omitted warning may have been appropriate, because it is thought that intervening probably wouldn't have changed the result anyway; due to Floyd's ability to box so brilliantly). So little wonder then that these additional features persistently feature in Hopkin's fights.

Actually, they persist so much that it's almost as if they're, effectively, condoned. Their presence does indicate something of Bernard's confidence though, in the same way that a

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fighter using other forms of unfair advantages might feel less confident without those advantages; if you know what I mean.

Anyway, if Cloud lands, in my opinion, he can easily take B-Hop out. His punch variety and power is good enough.

But then Tavoris won't be the first guy that Hopkins has fought that presents that problem, risk and danger. There is also the fact that for Tavoris to really "land", he relies to some extent on Hopkins either being stationary and/or careless during an exchange. And looking at the way Cloud fights (power and upper-body centric) it's challenging to think that Cloud won't have trouble with Bernard's movement, and also his creativity both with maneuvering opponents into vulnerable positions and setting up the right hand for those varieties of straight, looping and sneaky right crosses that Bernard loves to throw.

The view is particularly reinforced, at least in my opinion, when you see the way Cloud uses his jab, (and this is all critically speaking. Because after all Cloud is going in with Hopkins, the stakes are more than the "W", and Cloud will be comprehensively studied by at least Hopkins and Nazim) because, as far as Tavoris is concerned it seems that the job/job is completed when the elbow is fully extended.

After that it's sometimes dropped and often forgotten; too often to be foxing and/or milking.

With this in mind, I think, at times, Hopkins will see Cloud's exposed jawline and know it's not there because he is all old school, shoulder roll, slip and slide.

With the jawline as an exposed target Hopkins' right hand could chase Tavoris' left hand back to its starting position, and, at times also be lucky enough to, find that a semi-reliable compass error on Cloud's behalf – one that appears to have been indoctrinated from student days and here to stay – inadvertently introduces an altitude difference between shield and target that can be capitalized on. The habit not only allows Bernard to land even if Cloud could retract his jab faster than Bernard can come out of the traps and walk all over it - but it also complements Hopkins style of fighting as well as the speed deficit between the two movements (that already favored B-Hop) in such a way were Hopkins may be afforded much more creativity with – what surely must be – one of his final fights - if not his swan song performance.

Whether he is right or not, I think Bernard knows that as a boxing practitioner, particularly the old skool style of the noble art (overlooking Bernard's interest holding); there are very few muscle bound flat footed fighters that will give him problems.

Cloud won't want to get himself into a position where he complements Hopkins' style of fighting, particularly those elements that close down opponent's jabs and renders them eating embarrassing right hand leads. Kelly Pavlik knows what happens when that goes down, and it's very hard to execute a game plan when someone is inside your arzz, having a ball and embarrassing you.

Who knows, maybe Cloud wants this all to happen and it's a part of a larger plan to fox the fox

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and deliver youthful power and efficient aggression.

Whilst, for comparisons sake and to expand on the common Glen Johnson opponent, it may be interesting to discuss and/or envisage some of the other aggressive and/or youthful fighters Hopkins has fought like Jean Pascal and Chad Dawson; fighting or even beating Cloud; the reality of the matter is that when Tavoris steps up in the ring to fight Hopkins - Hopkins will be, undoubtedly, the first seriously good and marquee fighter Cloud has ever fought.

There is always a first time for everything, but that is still a big step up.

With that backdrop hanging there; I wonder if all Hopkins' experiences and advantages will be enough to successfully carry him past the youthful and aggressive, but predictable, determination that Cloud presents – similarly to, Pascal, Allen, Johnson, Brown and Mercado - whom all for various reasons - presented threats and challenges that were not without their parallels to, at least, some of Cloud's style.

Given how Bernard's power and unwillingness to fight three minutes of every round is probably a consideration that will feature in most of his serious opponents strategizing discussions as much as Hopkins' reliance on what the referee may not see and/or act upon; it's probably not unreasonable to expect that Cloud's fight plan will involve investing in Hopkins' 40 year old plus body.

For Cloud - who is by the way an excellent body puncher - this could perhaps be achieved without the same degree of concern for the debilitating head shot counters - that make some fighters think twice about committing and going to the body – particularly when facing, say, a KO artist.

Not in the least as Hopkins is no KO artist. In fact he is so defense minded these days that he's pulling some of the pop off his punches before they land; in the rush to get out of harm's way.

So Cloud can probably, within reason, rest easy when going to the body and implementing a critical part of his game plan. The last time Hopkins had KO victory was way back in 2004 when Oscar laid down whilst at the same time making Bernard very wealthy and reviving his career.

Anyway, if Cloud doesn't recognize these strategic considerations and advantages, particularly those associated with going to Hopkins body, and as a result his strategy overlooks the body and simply shoots for the head - his chances of getting Bernard to stay still long enough to fulfill the requirement he himself has to land big shots; will most likely disappear at the same rate that Hopkins runs away with the "W" for his swan song performance.

### **Radam G says:**

Wow! Storm, Cloud's best chance to beat B-Hop is to run away from him and rain punches. But that is not in the character of Cloud. He is a rushing storm -- hehehe -- a tsunami. And that type of fighter, you beat him by 45-degree moving and shooting and uppercuts.

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B-Hop will have a target-shooting, potshot night. Cloud has no footwork and is easy to razzle dazzle and hoodwink. Holla!

### **stormcentre says:**

Yes, agreed Radam. Cloud does look easy (for Hopkins) to wrong-foot and/or step around, and pot shot. I still think Cloud can hurt B-Hop though, just not sure he will and/or that Bernard will give him the chance.

### **Radam G says:**

Hurt comes with the terrority. That will not be a surprise. Getting B-Hop out of there would be. Holla!

### **Bernie Campbell says:**

Bjob will get his behind seriously slapped upside the head, even if he was 30 Cloud is the right man in the right place!