

Hearns Opponent Playing the Villain

By Mark Olejniczak

Who does that guy think he is? Didn't he realize he is in Detroit? Thomas Hearns cruiserweight opponent John Long (not the former Detroit Piston player), showed up for the press conference dressed in enemy colors. The silver and black attire was a definite conversation piece. I'm not talking about the Al Davis Oakland Raiders silver and black football jerseys.

The dreaded jersey that Long wore proudly was that of San Antonio Spurs Tim Duncan. Long knew the jersey would get Hearns attention. Hearns a very proud Detroit Piston fan and season ticket holder had some words of advice for the Missouri native. "You know what? I'm going to do this for myself and for the Pistons," Hearns fired back across the table. Long is playing the enemy role for what it is worth. First, with the Duncan jersey and then looking to spoil Hearns' return to the ring.

For John "Hurricane" Long this is his biggest fight to date. The journeyman is 19-6-1 (10 KO's) hails from St. Louis, MO and is looking forward to the fight. "I have been training for almost two months," Long says. "Once we received the phone call that they (the Hearns' camp) were very serious about setting up this fight. We have been getting ready."

On paper the odds are a long shot at best. Hearns is a seven time world champion who is looking for a strong showing in his hometown. The "Hitman" is a ring warrior who in many fights dominated his opponents with a devastating jab. This game plan will not change, with Hearns having a definite reach and four inch height advantage.

"I am not worried about John Long," Hearns says. "I have never seen John (Long) fight before, so I don't really know what to expect. I know what I have to do to get ready for this fight. I must make sure that I am crisp and sharp. As long as that happens, I won't have any problems."

Long pointed out that he has followed Hearns' career and respects him as a champion. That interest will be put on the back burner when he is looking across the ring at Hearns.

"When we go into the ring, he's going to try to take my head off and I'm going to try to take his head off," Long said. "I feel like I have a chance (to win)."

The Long-Hearns cruiserweight bout will be the main event on the nine-fight July 30th card at Cobo Arena in Detroit, MI.