

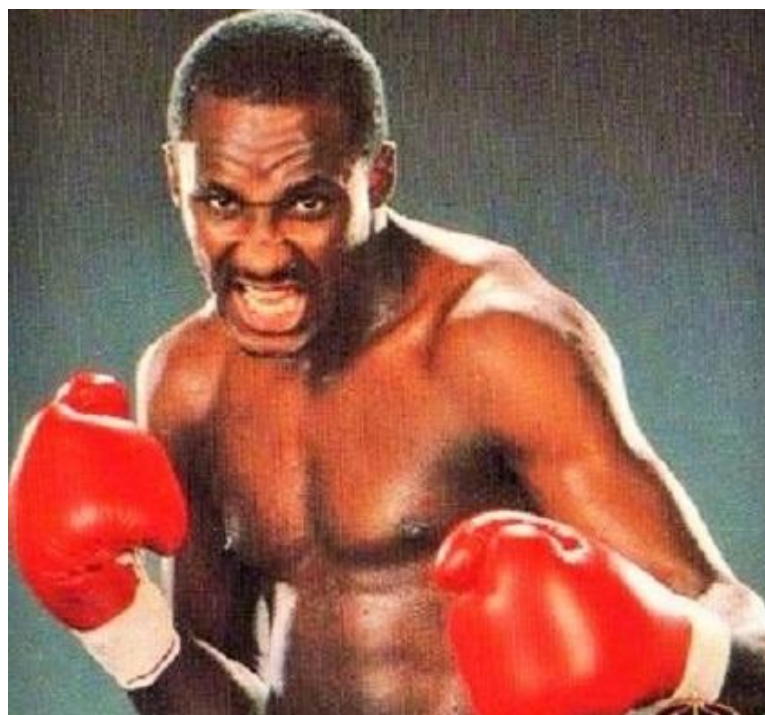
Aug. 23, 1986: McCallum vs Jackson

By Jamie Rebner

When Julian “The Hawk” Jackson challenged Mike “The Body Snatcher” McCallum on this day in 1986 for the latter’s WBA junior middleweight strap, it was more than just a match-up of unbeaten, elite-level prizefighters. It was a meeting between two decisive finishers, with fifty knockouts between them out of a combined fifty-five fights. This meant there wasn’t just pressure not to lose, but also to not be rendered helpless and humiliated in front of the sporting world and end up on the other man’s highlight reel.

And that was especially the case for McCallum. While both men were accustomed to ending bouts inside the distance, it was the Virgin Islands’ Jackson who was considered the more explosive puncher, his concussive power clearly evident in his rise up the ranks. However, despite accumulating a record of 29-0, Jackson had yet to face a truly significant test. In his first title shot, he was taking a significant step up in competition; everyone knew McCallum was a most capable pugilist, one of the best in the game.

Mike McCallum

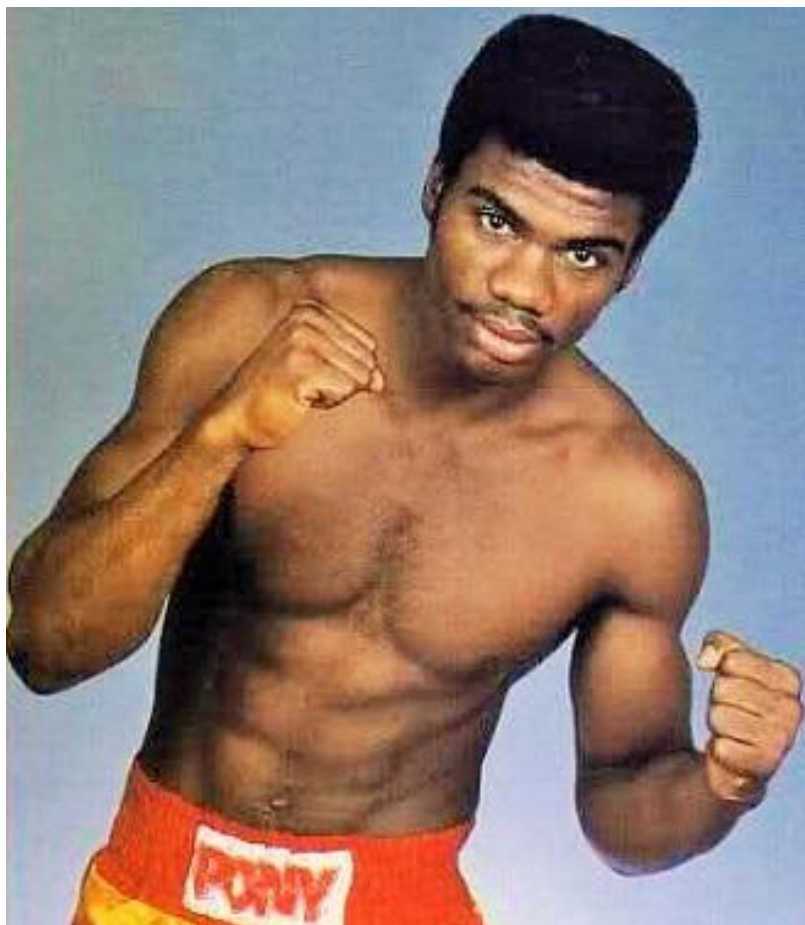


But Jackson showed he wasn’t intimidated by the moment, as he immediately attacked at the opening bell, coming forward and throwing a hard right, foregoing any feeling-out process. Immediately the pace ratcheted up, with Jackson unleashing his two-fisted attack. McCallum was caught off-guard but he held his ground and landed some good counters.

That is, until Jackson landed a sharp left hook that wobbled the champion and forced him to retreat. Jackson immediately pressed, eager to follow-up but McCallum was able to tie his man up and prevent further damage before quickly regaining his senses and landing some shots in return to keep the challenger at bay. The Jamaican then wisely adjusted his game

plan, using more lateral movement and a heavy dose of hard jabs to disrupt the challenger's offence.

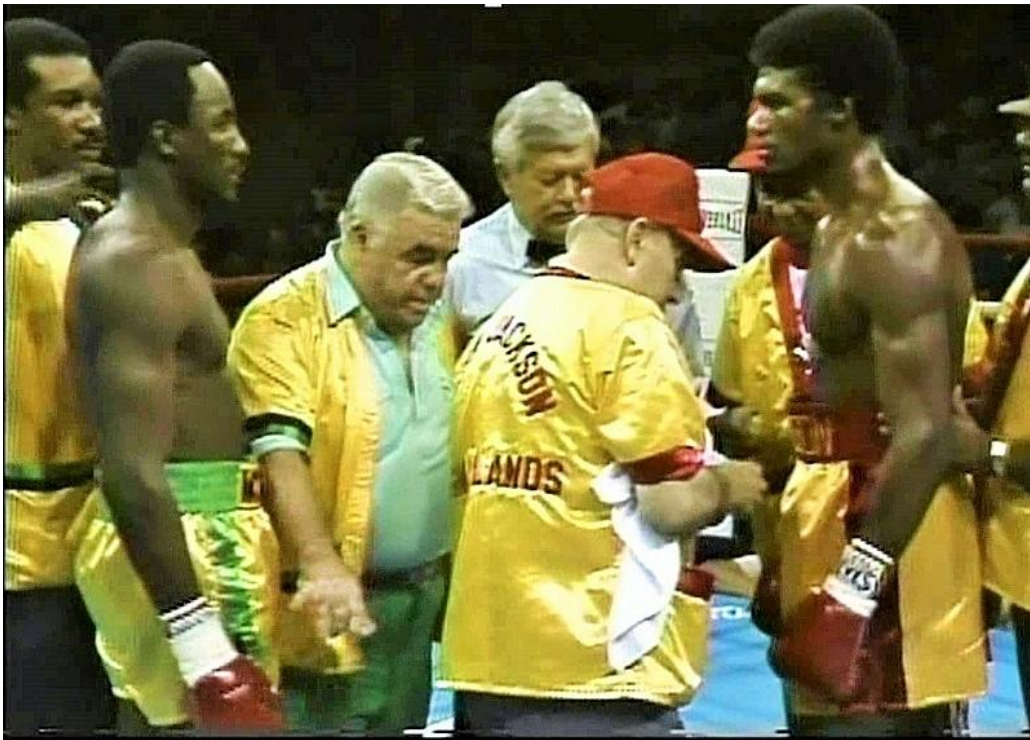
Julian Jackson



The momentum continued to swing in favour of the champion, his focus on defense being the main reason. Instead of trading leather, McCallum showed patience, letting the challenger throw so he could counter with precision and thus make the challenger miss and then make him pay. It was specifically the counters to the body that were most effective, as they took the wind out of Jackson's sails, and provided additional proof for McCallum's apt "Body Snatcher" nickname. At the end of round one, the raucous crowd at the Miami Beach Convention Centre roared in approval.

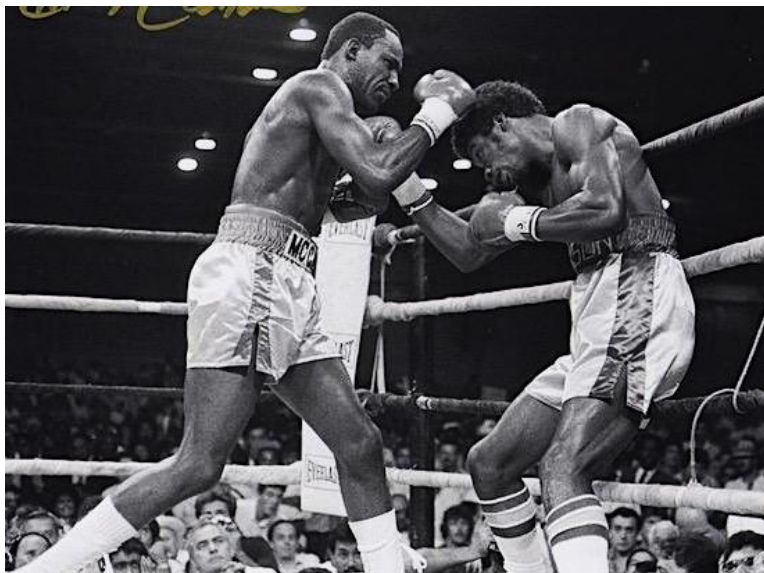
The torrid pace continued in the second, with the fighters exchanging bombs at close quarters, and it was only a matter of time before a truly damaging shot landed. That punch came courtesy of a McCallum left hook after a lead right, which caught Jackson on the chin and put him on one knee. Although "The Hawk" rose immediately, the champion moved in with bad intentions.

McCallum and Jackson get ready to do battle.



A left hook-right hand combination forced Jackson to the ropes, where the champ unleashed a vicious assault. McCallum landed a series of damaging blows including overhand rights, left hooks, and a number of well-timed and placed body shots. While Jackson tried to land one of his haymakers between McCallum's bursts, he wasn't successful, and the missed attempts only allowed more clean punches to get through. With the challenger keeping his guard up in an effort to protect his head, the champion wisely focused his efforts on the rib cage, on which he detonated a series of crushing hooks.

“The Body Snatcher” was just too much for “The Hawk.”

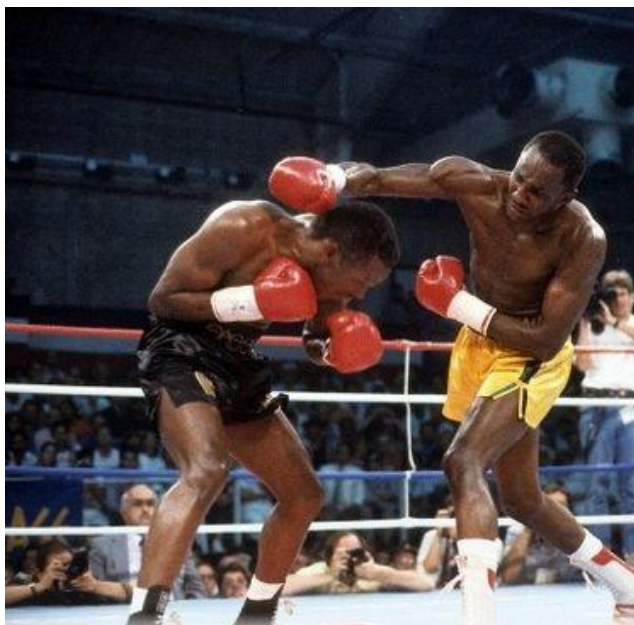


Sensing the finish, McCallum continued his pursuit, battering Jackson around the ring. The final sequence came after the champion landed a left hook that wobbled the challenger and sent him stumbling to the ropes. McCallum then fired off a series of shots which knocked Jackson's head around on a swivel and forced the ref to rightfully intervene and wave off the contest. Jackson immediately raised his arms in protest, but it was the right move. The beating was only getting worse and no one needed to see the challenger pummeled into total helplessness.

McCallum not only emphatically proved superiority over Jackson on that night but the same can be said about their careers at large. Although Jackson would rebound well from the loss, beating Baek In Chul for the WBA title that McCallum had vacated and making three impressive defenses, he would lose the two biggest fights of his career, suffering stoppages on both occasions to Gerald McClellan.

Meanwhile, McCallum would go on to defend his 154 pound title three more times, including standout wins over Milton McCrory and Donald Curry. He would only suffer his first loss in his middleweight debut, losing in a WBA title bid to wily veteran Sumbu Kalambay. Following that defeat, he regrouped and beat Herol Graham for a middleweight belt and defended against solid opposition in Steve Collins, Michael Watson, and Kalambay in a rematch. McCallum would also claim a light heavyweight title, and give the great James Toney all he could handle over the course of their trilogy before all was said and done.

McCallum vs. Curry



It's a travesty that McCallum is such a criminally underrated fighter. But despite being blatantly ducked by many of his era's best, he still took on all comers and bested some elite talents in his remarkable career. And near the top of his long list of impressive showings is his stoppage of Julian Jackson, when he vanquished a foe regarded as one of the hardest punchers of all-time. — **Jamie Rebner**