

## Championship Eludes Andrew Golota Again

Written by Mike Indri  
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### ***Ruiz victorious in Madison Square Garden "bar room brawl"***

Andrew Golota stood in the neutral corner, referee Randy Neumann was counting over a stunned and hurt champion John Ruiz, and many of the 12,777 boxing enthusiasts in attendance at Madison Square Garden were deliriously frenzied. Boxing's grandest and most historic venue was a virtual sea of red and white.

The Warsaw native, Golota, now living and fighting out of Chicago, had said all along this was "my time, my time to be world champion." For about 6-7 seconds in round two Saturday night it looked like Golota, with all the disqualifications, biting of opponents and quitting in the ring behind him, had finally achieved in his tumultuous boxing career that defining moment. Beating John Ruiz and taking his WBA championship belt would have distinguished the "Powerful Pole"; no more jokes, no more chokes, and certainly no more being escorted out of boxing rings getting pelted with debris and beer bottles.

Unfortunately, this was to be the closest Golota would get, his championship dreams were fleeting.

Golota, now 38-5-1 (with 31 KO's and 1 no contest), would get credit for a second knockdown with his dragging of Ruiz back down to the canvas in round two, would also benefit from Ruiz being penalized a point in round four (hitting behind the head) and by the end of round six - the halfway point of this foul-plagued fracas - Golota was ahead on two of the three judges' scorecards.

As the elbows, clinches, and fouls continued this main event melee, which was now out of control, would get even more dramatic and bizarre. During the eighth round referee Randy Neumann, a Ridgewood resident who once held the distinction of being New Jersey's heavyweight champion, ejected Ruiz's volatile and ever-protective trainer Norman "Stoney" Stone for being uncooperative and abusive, after Stone apparently refused to re-tape one of Ruiz's gloves.

"I was very disappointed with the referee," stated Ruiz. "I felt like I was fighting two fighters in the ring and I felt like they wanted to take my belt away."

As this sloppy and bruising hard fought bout continued the crowd began to notice a change. While the many fights in the Madison Square Garden stands continued, the "fight" in Andrew Golota began to diminish ever so slightly.

Two-time world champion John Ruiz (41-5-1 with 28 KO's) sensing the urgency, began landing the cleaner punches. Golota's punch output was dropping and the stronger, more athletic fighter was not taking advantage of his abilities.

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Ruiz's punches opened up a nasty cut over Golota's right eye early in the tenth round and while "The Quiet Man" Ruiz was beginning to make some noise and fighting to win, the beleaguered Golota was now struggling not to lose.

While the difference in fighting to win and fighting not to lose may be slight, there is a difference; this difference is what has made John Ruiz a world champion while Andrew Golota, the more talented and better boxer, has yet to reach boxing's pinnacle.

A dominating twelfth and final round secured the unanimous decision victory for John Ruiz. The judges scores of 114-111, 113-112 and 114-111 means that Ruiz will get his chance to fight one of the other champions (Lamon Brewster, Chris Byrd or Vitali Klitschko) while Golota, a former Polish amateur champion and Olympic medalist ponders his retirement.

Afterwards an obviously dejected Golota said, "I thought I won the fight, I am upside down, I am confused here. Maybe the judges were watching the fights outside the ring, not inside the ring."

In other heavyweight action on this Don King promoted "Rendezvous with Destiny/Battle for Supremacy" fightcard, which was televised on HBO Pay-Per-View, International Boxing Federation Champion Chris Byrd (38-2-1, 20 KO's) showcased his incomparable boxing skills and immense heart as he overcame leviathan Jameel McCline's 56lb. weight and 4 inch height advantage to retain his title with a split-decision victory.

Former champion Hasim Rahman needed only four rounds to dispatch Kali Meehan. Rahman, looking for a title shot, put himself right back into the championship picture, hurting the Australian Meehan often before the referee halted the contest after the fourth round.

The most difficult time of this otherwise entertaining fight night was watching former four-time champion, and future hall-of-famer, Evander Holyfield (38-8-2, 25 KO's) fallaciously continuing on in his quest to become the undisputed heavyweight champion. Holyfield was battered by Larry "The Legend" Donald (42-3-2, 24 KO's) over 12 rounds, suffering a unanimous decision loss. Afterwards, the greatest heavyweight champion during this era stated, "I still believe that I can rise to the occasion and I have never given up on anything. I will have to pray on it."

We are praying too champ, please.