

## John Ruiz and Fres Oquendo Too Quiet Men

Written by Rick Folstad  
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I'm having nightmares.

I was an innocent witness to the John Ruiz - Fres Oquendo barn dance Saturday night and now I can't sleep. The nightmares have turned gruesome and I'm afraid to close my eyes. The scarring may be permanent.

When I do shut my eyes, I see a vision of two large men standing in the middle of a busy street, stopping traffic and staring at each other, mouths open and hands at their sides. They seem to recognize one another, though they can't quite place the names.

"Hey, didn't you used to sell used cars outside of Toledo?" asks one of the men, a dark, brooding guy by the name of John Ruiz.

"No," says the stranger, an imposter known as "Fast" Fres Oquendo. "But I used to be a bartender in Cleveland."

The two men continue to stare at one another for about 30 minutes while commuters and cab drivers scream at them to move, to get out of the way. To do something. Anything.

"Wait a minute," the man known as Ruiz finally yells over the din. "Now I remember where it was. The Cozy Corner Bar on Ninth Street. I used to go there after work. Remember me, the Quietman? I used to sell shoes at the Sole Place. We used to talk all the time."

Suddenly recognizing each other, the two men hug right there in the middle of the street, horns honking and the curses getting louder, traffic backing up for miles.

Then I wake up in a cold sweat.

Maybe this is where I should stop and apologize to barn dancers across the country. Compared to Saturday night's Ruiz - Oquendo fiasco, you barn dancers put on a pretty violent show, actually making physical contact at different times during your do-si-dos.

In case you fell asleep or opted to watch Trading Spaces reruns instead of the fight, Ruiz won, though the rest of us were the big losers. That's because Ruiz and Oquendo got paid. We didn't. If there was real justice in the world, we would have gotten half our money back for the pay-per-view fight.

Ruiz, famous for the jab-and-hug, stopped Oquendo in the 11th round to hold onto his WBA title. Now he wants to unify the title, which - if it happens - might require therapy for some of us who remember the way the heavyweight division used to be.

It's still too early to say whether the fight was stopped for Oquendo's well-being or ours. He

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didn't appear to be hurt and was still on his feet when referee Wayne Kelly, showing mercy on the Garden crowd and viewers across the world, finally pulled the plug.

At one point in the fight, Kelly actually reminded the two fighters that they were in a prizefight and that as part of the rules of a prizefight, punches are required to be thrown.

If there was one serious casualty in this fight, it might have been Madison Square Garden. The place will never be the same. From here on out, it will always be haunted, the place where a piece of the heavyweight championship died of supreme boredom.

Meanwhile, the nightmares continue.