

## Marco Disappoints and a P4P Note

Written by Joey Knish

Wednesday, 12 May 2004 18:14

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Last Saturday in San Antonio, Texas, Marco Antonio Barrera did something I never really figured we would see. No, it wasn't the fact that he lost to Philippine Manny Pacquiao that was such a disappointment. There certainly is no shame in losing to a fighter who is younger, faster, punching harder and coming across with irresistible force. However, there is sometimes a noble way of losing a fight. Head butting, hitting on the break, and feigning injury don't qualify as noble ways to go down. As most expert's Pound-for-Pound King, especially following the lackluster performance of Roy Jones Jr. the week before, Barrera was perhaps being held to a higher standard. Not anymore.

In the early rounds, Pacquiao was coming at Barrera with both guns blazing, showing Barrera that he could handle whatever the Mexican threw at him. Eventually a Pacquiao laser dropped Barrera who was clearly shaken, but not stirred. As often happens when an orthodox fighter meets a southpaw, there was a clash of heads that resulted in a small gash over the eye of Barrera. As the referee took a look at the cut, The Baby Faced Assassin grimaced in pain with a look as if to say "Geez, I don't know if I can go on, this is pretty bad". Clearly he could continue and proof of that came as, by the end of the very same round, the cut had stopped bleeding on its own.

After more of the same - PacMan, the aggressor, landing the cleaner, harder punches and their heads touching on a few occasions - Barrera seemed to either be so frustrated with the action, or acutely aware that he was not going to win this fight, that he seemed to be looking for a way out. Having been cut by a headbutt, Barrera came down and up at Pacquiao like a Ram butting horns and tried to return the favor to his counterpart - or get disqualified for it. Yes, it was that blatant. Instead, he was probably disappointed with a warning by the referee and was forced to continue. On went the one-sided battle and Barrera clearly was done...but not quite. As the fighters held and were being separated, Barrera - the People's Champion - took a wicked swing and connected flush on Pacquiao's face. This time Barrera lost a point, I guess he was making progress . . . as far as getting out of the fight goes.

There is a lot to be said for a fighter who fights - both when things are good and when things are not going his way. The Arturo Gatti's of the world are few and far between. Taking a beating and knowing it, is something that is tough to endure sometimes; but the great fighters, or fighters with great hearts, do. They war on knowing the battle is not done until the bell, the ref, or a ringside doctor says so and we hold them in the highest regard for it. A 22-year old Fernando Vargas took a beating from Felix "Tito" Trinidad in a great fight in 2000 and kept getting up, getting up, getting up, getting up and getting up (that was 5 knockdowns, right); his heart telling him he was just one punch away from victory. Richard Hall took a tremendous beating - there is just no other word for it - from Roy Jones Jr. before having the bout mercilessly stopped after 11 rounds of Hall's migraine inducing defeat. What we saw from Marco Antonio Barrera last Saturday did not suggest there was much fight left in the man, although the man was still in the fight.

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Two weeks ago Roy Jones Jr. looked like anything but a Pound-for-Pound Champion; and before the fight this past weekend, there was talk of Barrera ascending to that role. After the loss on Saturday by Barrera - and the fashion in which he lost - he has certainly removed himself from contention. So, for now at least, let's throw that claim to Floyd Mayweather Jr. Sure he fights his best only when he has to; but when he is good, he is oh-so-good.