

Vargas Wins Tough Decision Over Joval

Written by Robert Ecksel

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Fernando Vargas (25-2, 24 KOs) returned to the ring after a long layoff and decisioned Raymond Joval (33-4, 15 KOs) over ten rounds Saturday night at the American Bank Center in Corpus Christi, Texas.

Vargas, aka El Feroz, aka The Aztec Warrior, was making his first start since December 2003, and it was a new improved Ferocious Fernando Vargas who climbed through the ropes. He landed the bigger shots throughout the night, but the surprisingly tough Joval pressed the action.

Vargas dominated the first round with his ring generalship, his jab and big left hook. El Feroz dominated round two, but Joval was in his face the whole time, and let Vargas know he was in for a fight. A Vargas hook in the closing seconds of the round staggered Joval.

Joval controlled the action in round number three and a solid right got Vargas' attention. The Oxnard native fought back, but lost the round.

Ray Joval was a perpetual motion machine firing punches in the fourth. Vargas was the sharpshooter, looking to counter Joval, whose nonstop aggression was piling up points. It looks like Vargas was in a tougher fight than expected.

The fifth round was more of the same, with Joval throwing and Vargas catching and throwing back. Even though Joval appeared to be the bigger man, Vargas' punches carry more weight.

Things slowed in round six. There was a disputed push-punch-slip-knockdown of Joval, which the referee Laurence Cole missed, but which gave Vargas the round. Vargas won the seventh with hooks and uppercuts to Joval's body and head. Even though there was no quit in Joval, it looked like Vargas was finally beginning to take control of the fight

Joval's right eyelid was sliced open by Vargas in the eighth. The blood bothered Joval and took him out of his game plan, but he weathered the storm and was firing back at the bell to end the round.

The ninth was a big round for Joval. An accidental low blow by Joval that ref Cole also missed caused Vargas to drop his hands . . . and Joval unloaded. Vargas came on in the closing seconds, but it wasn't enough to win the round.

The tenth and final round was as competitive as the rounds preceding it. Vargas controlled the action. Joval was in his face the whole time. Vargas landed the more telling blows, but Joval was the busier fighter.

The judges scored the fight 98-92, 96-94 and 97-93 for the comeback kid Fernando Vargas. Raymond Joval, although the loser in Corpus Christi, put on one helluva show. We hope to see

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him back in action again soon.