

Mormeck Upsets Braithwaite in Demolition Derby

Written by Matthew Aguilar
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The cruiserweight division has one champion. And Jean-Marc Mormeck has two belts.

The powerful Frenchman added Wayne Braithwaite's WBC crown to his WBA belt Saturday in Worcester, Massachusetts via unanimous decision, becoming the first unified cruiserweight champion since Evander Holyfield knocked out Rickey Parkey in 1987.

Mormeck used his machinegun like combinations and superior strength to overwhelm the taller Braithwaite on the inside. Mormeck hurt Braithwaite early and knocked him down for the first time in his career with a right hand to the temple in the seventh.

The defending WBC champ from Guyana showed guts in surviving until the final bell, but the scores (115-111 Glen Feldman, 114-112 Chuck Hasset, 116-112 Peter Trematerra) were unanimous for Mormeck.

Perhaps more significant than the alphabet crowns, Mormeck became *The Ring* magazine's recognized 200-pound champion with the sterling victory.

"I was ready for everything," said Mormeck, who was not at all affected by Braithwaite's constant switch-hitting. "(And while) any punch that lands hurts, I was ready for anything."

Mormeck showed that he could be a star in the much-maligned cruiserweight division, which has attracted little attention since its inception 25 years ago.

Holyfield has been the sole cruiserweight star. And Mormeck showed that he just might be the best 200-pounder since Evander.

The French fireplug immediately pinned his bald head to Braithwaite's chest and imposed his will at the start of the fight. Mormeck's aggressiveness and strength seemed to surprise his adversary, who tried his best to fight with his back against the ropes. He soon realized that his strategy of outworking Mormeck would be impossible to execute.

Mormeck showed Holyfield-like ability, stunning Braithwaite with quick, short bursts to the body and head on the inside. Right hands, left hooks, uppercuts - it didn't matter. Mormeck was connecting with everything. And all Braithwaite could offer in return were his considerable guts.

Braithwaite had his best moments when he fired away at Mormeck's body, and late in the sixth he hurt Mormeck and made him back off just before the bell. Braithwaite tried to continue the onslaught in the seventh before tiring - and Mormeck seized the moment.

Mormeck trapped Braithwaite on the ropes and unloaded a searing combination, punctuated by a big right hand high on the WBC champ's head, putting him down. Braithwaite got up and held on for dear life for the remainder of the round.

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Braithwaite showed his champion's heart again in the eighth, after referee Dick Flaherty deducted a point for excessive holding. Big Truck unleashed vicious flurries on the rock-like WBA champ, but couldn't dent him.

Braithwaite suffered a deep gash over his left eye, and the eighth represented his last stand.

Mormeck continued to apply the pressure to wrap up the victory.

Afterwards, the classy Braithwaite showed good sportsmanship.

"Mormeck is a great champion. I tried my best," he told Showtime's Steve Farhood. "I would like to get a rematch. All great champions rebound from a loss. But all respect to Mormeck. To beat me, you have to be a great champion."

Promoter Don King said the new king of the cruiserweights has several options. Possible opponents include former IBF champ Kelvin Davis.

"The cruiserweight division now has an identification," King said. "We'll fight anybody and everybody. We have a lot of options and we'll go to the drawing board to see who we'll pursue."