

Mohegan Sun's Main Event Is Boxing

Written by Robert Ecksel
Tuesday, 05 April 2005 18:00

For those who live in or near New England and have a taste for games of chance, the Mohegan Sun in Uncasville, Connecticut is the place. For those in the area with simpler tastes, the Mohegan Sun also spotlights boxing.

The Mohegan Sun in association with Capiello Promotions presented a six-bout card on April 1, 2005, broadcast on ESPN2's Friday Night Fights. Before the fighting commenced, I spoke with a few of the officials working the show and asked about boxing at the Mohegan Sun.

George Smith, one of the evening's judges, told me: "I feel as though I died and went to boxing heaven. I grew up in the dark, damp gyms in the projects where you had to have guts just to get out of your car. And here the casino hires their own people: not just one ring doctor, but three. A fighter better have his paperwork in order or he doesn't fight. That's the way boxing should be. I was born too late. We should have had this twenty, thirty years ago. They are to be commended, because they try doubly hard to do it right. They have their own commission. They have critiques after every show. They want to get better. And they do get better."

The referee Dick Flaherty was also working the card. "I was a gym rat when I was young, boxed in the amateurs, couple of pro fights, decided I wasn't going to be world champion, and started officiating. I did Marvin Hagler when he was coming up. I did Sugar Ray Leonard, James Toney, Wayne McCollough," he said. "I love working for these guys. They're great. They have a great operation here. They treat everybody fairly and no one complains. The officials here belong to different organizations. They're well schooled. They're all well traveled. They know their job. There's a lot of support from the Mohegan organization. There's a lot of support for the boxing program."

I spoke with boxing judge Julie Lederman as well and asked her about the Mohegan Sun. "It's first-class," she said. "It's organized. We have meetings before and after the fights. It's a very strong commission. This is how it's supposed to be. The most important thing as a judge is that you're focused and that you don't have any worries and that your mind is clear. And that's what it's like working for a good commission. We all come in here, we have our coffee, we have our soda, we have food to eat, we have our bout sheets, we have our scorecards filled out with our names. All we have to focus on is the fight. Nothing else. We come to the arena and we're not rushed, we're not stressed, we just focus on our job and that's it. Nice and calm and relaxed. No stress."

The Friday Night Fights at the Mohegan Sun got underway with a featherweight four-rounder. Dave "The White Shark" Drouin (0-3-2 0 KOs), fighting out of the blue corner in blue trunks with white trim and hailing from Quebec, Canada, got it on with Mike "The Machine" Oliver (7-0 4 KOs), a Hartford southpaw sensation wearing red trunks trimmed with white. Despite the disparity in their records, these fighters appeared evenly matched. Oliver got off to a quick start and rocked Drouin several times in the first. By the middle of the round, however, Drouin caught Oliver in the corner and started to unload. The Canadian closed impressively to win the round.

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The fighters picked up where they left off in round two. Drouin had no defense to speak of, so he kept getting socked, and was on unsteady legs as round two ended. Round three saw both men land their best shots. Although Drouin looked the worse for wear, White Shark's skin a mottled crimson, it seemed he just about solved Oliver's southpaw style, but The Machine came on in the last thirty seconds and won the third. Oliver's counterpunching dominated the first half of the fourth and final round, but when Drouin landed he landed big - big enough, in my opinion, to win the round and the fight. The judges did not agree. They had it 39-37, 40-36 and 40-36 for Oliver.

The second bout of the night was a scheduled four round bout between cruiserweights. Fighting out of the red corner, Chris McInerney (2-0 2 KOs) from Stoughton, Massachusetts, wearing blue trimmed with white, met William "Raging Bill" Hernandez from Providence, Rhode Island, also wearing blue trunks with white trim for his pro debut. At the opening bell McInerney, a long and lean fighting machine, took the fight to Raging Bill and connected with a gigantic left hook. Hernandez went down like a ton of bricks. The referee Joe Cusano knelt over the fighter but didn't bother to count. He called it at 1:06 of the first.

Fight three highlighted two welterweights in a messy ten-rounder. The always exciting Charles Tschorniaewsky (28-9-1 14 KOs), aka Chucky T, hailing from the City of Brotherly Love, rumbled with Chad "Bad Intentions" Brisson (18-2 11 KOs) from Winnipeg, Canada. Chucky T, wearing black trunks with white trim and fighting out of the blue corner, is one of those fighters who bleeds at the singing of the national anthem. He leads with his face and is one tough kid, too tough for his own damn good. Brisson, wearing white and blue trunks, won the first round solely with his jab. Chucky T was catching, as is his custom, but he was trying, looking, hoping, praying for an opening that never came. Round one Brisson. Bad Intentions had a bad round two. He began mixing up his punches. Tschorniaewsky took like a man. The ref Eddie Cotton was looking closely at the pug from Philly, who had nicks on his face and was bleeding from a cut near his eye. Brisson landed lead rights and combinations to Chucky T's face in the third. T-Man was now bleeding from both eyes, as well as from his nose and mouth. The Canadian added body punches to his assault in the fourth. A look of confusion peeked beneath the blood on Chuck's face. The referee visited Tschorniaewsky's corner between rounds and figured enough was enough. T was taken to a local hospital for observation. I saw Chucky T stride defiantly toward an ambulance in the garage outside the arena. He wore a cheeky expression on his face.

The fourth fight at the Mohegan Sun featured New Haven's Elvin Ayala (10-0 4 KOs), wearing red trunks with white trim, fighting Jose "Stinger" Medina (7-4 2 KOs), wearing white trimmed with red and green, in a middleweight six-rounder. Both men got busy at the opening bell, but Ayala was more aggressive than Medina in the first. Ayala's combinations found a home in the second. Medina came on in the third with some solid body work, but Ayala outworked Medina in the final minute and stole the round. The fourth was a big round for Ayala. Every punch at Medina found its mark. Medina made it to his corner at the bell and was grimacing on his stool. The ringside physician, Dr. Anthony Alessi, examined Medina and told the ref to call the fight. Ayala extended his winning streak to ten victories without a loss.

The next fight was the main event at Mohegan Sun and on ESPN2. It featured Willie Gibbs

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(18-1 15 KOs), aka Sir William the Gladiator, from Philadelphia, versus Andres "Panda" Pacheco (13-3 9 KOs) from Pueblo, Colorado. Gibbs is Bernard Hopkins' cousin, so he has a bloodline that is hard to beat. Wearing Russell Crowe in "Gladiator"-like gold facial armor to go along with his burgundy and gold trunks, Gibbs made an impressive ring entrance. He was no less impressive when he removed his robe and the opening bell sounded. Without his "Gladiator" mask, Gibbs could see what was before him: an opponent with a soft body begging to be hit. Mixing it up with jabs and occasional uppercuts, Gibbs obliged and the sound of boxing gloves smacking a flabby midsection filled the arena. The first ended with Pacheco on the ropes getting walloped. Round two picked up where round one left off. Pacheco got in his licks – with a name like Pacheco, you know this gaucho was tough - but he wasn't in there with just anyone. He was fighting Willie Gibbs. Gibbs caught Pacheco with a combination which dropped him near the end of the round. Pacheco beat the count, absorbed more punishment, and somehow made it to his corner. The ring doc waved it off. Sir William the Gladiator crushed Panda Pacheco.

The sixth and final fight of the night was a four round swing bout between cruiserweights Tyrone Smith (3-0 1 KO), battling out of Boston in white trunks with black trim, and Augustine Trujillo (2-2 2 KOs), from Pueblo, Colorado, in black trunks trimmed with white. Both men traded at the opening bell. Both men got rocked. But Smith got rocked less. He won the first. He owned round two. But while he was winging punches at Trujillo, the hombre from Pueblo was winging punches back. Smith wobbled Trujillo in the third. Trujillo twice lost his mouthpiece, which slowed the fight down, but there wasn't much fight left in the Coloradoan after three. The fourth and final round of the fight and the night was a devil-may-care free-for-all. Both men gave all they had to give. Smith just had the edge. The judges scored it 38-38, 38-38 and 39-37. A majority draw for Tyrone Smith.

The next fight card at the Mohegan Sun is a Golden Boy/ESPN2 production on May 13 headlined by super middleweight Librado Andrade (22-0 15 KOs).

I'm counting the days.