

Galindez vs. Conteh: What Could Have Been

Written by Jim Amato
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One of the best potential matchups in the mid-1970s that never took place would have been a light heavyweight unification bout between WBA titleholder Victor Galindez of Argentina versus WBC title claimant John Conteh of England.

After world champion Bob Foster was given a gift draw over Argentina's Jorge Ahumada in June of 1974, Bob no longer looked like an unbeatable force at 175-pounds. In fact, it was becoming obvious that Father Time was eroding "Bad Bob's" skills. Then the WBC wanted Bob to defend against top ranked John Conteh. The WBA told Bob to put his title on the line against Victor Galindez. If Bob fought Conteh, the WBA would probably strip him of the title. If he met Galindez, the WBC would have likely taken their recognition away from him. In his frustration Bob decided to just hang them up, thus leaving the title vacant.

The WBA and the WBC acted quickly. Galindez was matched with Len "Stinger" Hutchins for the WBA version, while Conteh was matched against Ahumada for WBC recognition. Galindez proved to be too strong and overwhelmed Hutchins. Conteh, in turn, put on a clinic and outscored a game and competitive Ahumada.

What would have happened if these two outstanding boxers met when they were both at the top of their game? This was a much anticipated unification match that for a variety of reasons never materialized. Who would have come out on top in this classic "Dream Match?"

Looking back at their overall careers, I feel Galindez met the better quality opposition. He fought Ahumada in their native Argentina on numerous occasions. He met Yaqui Lopez (twice), Ritchie Kates (twice), Pierre Fourrie (twice), Eddie Mustapha Muhammad and Marvin Johnson. Conteh also met Ahumada and Yaqui Lopez. He also beat Lonnie Bennett and destroyed Len Hutchins in three rounds. He would later give Matthew Saad Muhammad a terrific battle, before losing a close decision. Matthew beat Conteh handily in the rematch.

THE FIGHT: John Conteh was a standup boxer with quick hands. He was a sharp and accurate hitter with deceptive power. Galindez was a bull. He had tremendous physical strength. He was somewhat slow, but he was very crafty. He had a way of backing himself to the ropes and counterpunching from that position. Conteh was at this stage of his career a physical marvel, a superbly conditioned individual.

How could you not see Conteh jumping out to an early lead with his faster hands? I could also see Victor taking refuge against the ropes and landing some sweet counters. Conteh slows a bit and Galindez is coming on as they enter the middle rounds. Each fighter has been cut, but neither boxer is in any real danger of having the bout stopped.

After ten rounds Conteh's better boxing has given him a solid lead on the scorecards. As they enter the "championship rounds," Victor becomes more aggressive. Conteh seems to be tiring a bit and Galindez is starting to impose his will. Toward the end of the twelfth round Conteh puts

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on a rally landing six unanswered sharp blows that wobble Victor.

Coming out for the thirteenth, Conteh tries to follow up his advantage from the previous round. The barrage of punches ends quickly. John is a tired warrior now and Victor senses this. Galindez is an animal on the loose. He is a throwback to the big tough bruisers of yesteryear. Right before the bell ending the thirteenth round, Victor hurts Conteh with a left hook.

The stage has now been set. As the fourteenth round begins Galindez has become a swarming attacker. Conteh is trying to hold him off with jabs and uppercuts but his punches have lost their snap. Victor pins Conteh on the ropes and unleashes his own uppercut that lands flush. John stiffens for a second and then slides to canvas. He is OUT!

The winner and UNDISPUTED light heavyweight champion of the world . . . Victor Galindez.