Written by Mike Indri
Wednesday, 18 May 2005 19:00

Former WBC featherweight champion Kevin "The Flushing Flash" Kelley brought his wealth of boxing skills and experience to Philadelphia's legendary Blue Horizon Tuesday night to face untested prospect Jose Reyes in what was to be the Vineland, New Jersey resident's "step-up" fight.

To the dismay of Reyes and his handlers, the still dangerous Kelley, now fighting out of Las Vegas, was too much of a step-up.

Fighting in front of a live ESPN televised audience, Kelley, in the second fight on his comeback trail, took center stage. Showcasing his superior boxing skills and hand speed, Kelley (now 56-6-2 with 37 KOs) quickly turned the Reyes crowd into Kelley fans with his fun-to-watch style. Counterpunching beautifully and even at times hurting the stronger Reyes, Kelley appeared to have Reyes confused and frustrated by the local fighter's inability to catch up with the former champ.

Fighting in his seventh straight bout (and eighth of his last nine) at the Blue Horizon, Reyes looked a little troubled; while Kelley, surprisingly making his first ever appearance at the storied boxing venue, fought a controlled, relaxed fight.

Reyes sensed urgency late in the bout and landed some of his better shots, but he suffered a flash knockdown in round nine that proved devastating. While up quickly, the damage was done, as the 10-8 round enabled Kelley to pull out the victory via unanimous decision. With the judges scoring it 96-93, 95-94 and 95-94 for Kelley, minus Reyes' brief trip to the canvas, the young prospect suffered the second loss (now 17-2 with 6 KOs) of his pro career.

Credit goes to the seasoned veteran Kelley who schooled a tough and resilient fighter, practically in his own backyard, and finished strong.

"I felt good, I felt strong," stated the classy former champ before he had to run off and get medical attention for his painful left hand.

In the night's co-feature bout, Philly's own heavyweight prospect "Fast" Eddie Chambers stayed undefeated (now 23-0 with 13 KOs) against accomplished veteran Ross Puritty. Puritty, best known for beating the once-indestructible Wladimir Klitschko (TKO 11 on 12/05/98), has been in there with just about everyone and many thought he would give the young Chambers a stiff test. Unfortunately, Purity (now 29-19-3 with 26 KOs), while obviously the stronger, more powerful fighter, presented very little in the way of offense and lost a one-sided lackluster ten-round unanimous decision.

The likable Norman, Oklahoma native reasoned afterwards: "I got thumbed in my eye early and couldn't really see."

On the Blue Horizon undercard, former middleweight contender Mario Maldonado fighting in his third fight after a twenty year hiatus - yes - I said TWENTY years! - thrilled the crowd, earning a four-round majority decision win against the physically imposing Jamal "Spider" McKay (now 3-7-2, 1 KO). Maldonado improved to 29-13-1, with 14 KOs.

Breon Smiley, fighting in his pro debut, somehow drew the unthinkable task of taking on the difficult and undefeated Saeed Hawkins from Philadelphia. The overmatched Atlantic City native was dispatched in round two via TKO. Hawkins improved to 7-0 with his third KO victory.

In a four-round cruiserweight bout, the hard luck kid Newton Kidd (5-3-1 with 3 KOs) had to settle for a majority draw against Frank Walker. Walker, now 10-1-1, traveled from Orient, North Carolina to meet the New Yorker in Philly.

Highly regarded junior lightweight Antonio Espinoso, fighting out of West New York, New Jersey, stayed perfect at 5-0 (1 KO) against a willing Luis Lopez (3-7-1, 1 KO) from North Bergen.

Former Boston College football standout turned heavyweight prospect Derrick Rossy, now 6-0 with 5 KOs, displayed the one necessary tool required to advance within the brutal sport of boxing which can not be taught - heart. While hindered with a profusely bleeding nose, struggling with his stamina, and facing an unyielding opponent in Rodney Ray (2-2, 2 KOs), Rossy never stopped coming forward and never stopped throwing punches. Finally catching the just-as-exhausted Ray late in the fourth and final round with one of his bombs, Rossi put his opponent down for good at 2:39. It was a well-earned lesson on his way to heavyweight contention.

In the evening’s opening bout Orlando Lewis (now 3-0, 3 KOs) overpowered Dayton, Ohio’s Terry Johnson, who dropped to 5-11 (1 KO) in a mismatch of a welterweight contest.

Overall it was a great night of boxing at one of the sport’s most legendary venues. A great job was done by ring announcer extraordinaire Larry Tornabe, and it was good to see former two-time world heavyweight champion Tim Witherspoon and the rugged former contender Randall "Tex" Cobb, as well as one of boxing’s current greats Kassim Ouma, in the crowd.

This Friday, May 20th, the Blue Horizon is hosting a "White Collar Boxing" night.

For all those interested in lacing up the gloves contact the Blue Horizon's Vernoca Michael or Fern at (215) 763-0500.