

The First 36-Minute Blizzard in Vegas

Written by Joe Rein
Wednesday, 18 May 2005 19:00

Instead of the Puerto Rican National Anthem when Tito Trinidad fought Winky Wright at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, it would've been more appropriate to sing, "I can't get started with you."

The lyrics told the whole story for 12 frustrating – astonishing – rounds. One of the most feared punchers in decades wasn't beat up, he was *beaten on* -- neutralized -- relegated to a target. It was the first 36-minute blizzard in Vegas history.

Around the sixth, the thought occurred, it *must* be an imposter. Hopkins embarrassed Tito...but *this* was a mismatch. To describe it as a rout would've implied a contest. Wright rat-tat-tatted Trinidad's head like a speed bag. His jab brought new meaning to the words "in your face."

Tito had to be kicking back in Cupey Alto; thankful it wasn't he who was being humiliated.

Trinidad, in growing desperation -- a glove always in his eyes -- searched frantically for a breach in the wall. (Not storming it; he couldn't get that close.) He was left, futilely, pounding at the gates – "*Let me in!*" He never found an answer – nor did Papa Trinidad...Winky had them all.

Wright's a pressure fighter who jackhammers accurately, leaving a man no comfort. He lays leather -- not brain numbing, but disheartening...until the lead is insurmountable. Sharing the ring with Wright is an education – a painful one.

"I ain't out here to show people if I can take a punch," he said to me on Media Day. "I'm gonna dip and dart. Believe me, when he miss, he gonna get a hard one back. "

Every round was a repeat of the other: Winky dissected Trinidad with all the flamboyance of a Swiss watch. Trinidad used the sponge defense, absorbing everything. Corazon wasn't his problem; his big guns were muzzled -- his fans never in the fight. It was Hopkins *deja vu*: blunted, and without a clue.

All the Viagra in the world couldn't have restored Tito's potent offense; he was so dispirited. He's lucky he wasn't the first fighter KO'd by whiplash.

It's all the more impressive, considering how shockingly Tito'd dispatched so many other world-class fighters. It wasn't rust or staleness; he was spanked and blanked by a better fighter -- more technically sound -- superbly trained for 18 years by Dan Birmingham -- much the way "Nacho" Beristain forges his fighters -- hands high -- always within themselves.

It never makes them scintillating, only appreciated by peers. Yell "*BOXING MATCH!*" in a crowded arena and you wouldn't want to be responsible for the casualties in the stampede out.

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Boxing's a blood sport, and describing Winky as a Sweet Scientist doesn't fire the imagination of ticket buyers. Nobody lines up to see a singles hitter?

As a follow-up to Corrales-Castillo, it was an anti-climax -- a primer on the Marquis of Queensbury -- Wright demonstrating every page, drawing special attention to the jab -- not the crucible that made legends the week before.

Wright's got Pay-Per-View skills, not charisma. He reduced a seven-time world champion to a catcher.

They must be better friends than anyone imagined. During the buildup for the fight, Gary Shaw, Wright's manager/promoter, gave Trinidad a baseball glove "to practice catching." Trinidad said he had "no experience"; Winky would "have to teach" him. Wright must have worked selflessly with Tito. From the opening bell, Tito had a Golden Glove; nothing got by him.

It wasn't worth \$50 seeing Wright cuff a sparring partner. There was more chance of violence after the fight watching Don King share the ring with Larry Merchant.

Maybe...it was worth shelling out...Had I not seen it; I wouldn't have believed it.

With two victories over Mosley -- and now this -- Winky's turned skeptics to believers. *Back-in-t*
he-day ,

he'd be called "a helluva fighter." Time will tell if he's a great one.