

## When The Underdog Gets Bit

Written by Mitch Abramson  
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Ruben Galvan told his corner to never, under any condition, throw in the towel. On June 25, circumstances dictated that Galvan was ignored.

Galvan, a grizzled veteran from Hammond, Indiana, was getting punished by Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. on the undercard of Floyd Mayweather and Arturo Gatti in Atlantic City.

With his head getting snapped back like an elastic band, Galvan appeared out on his feet twice in the fourth round. His well-traveled guts and grit were the only things keeping him upright.

Someone somewhere has a snapshot of the New Jersey State Athletic Control Board's commissioner, Larry Hazzard, jumping up and down, imploring the referee, Benjy Esteves, to end the bout.

The crowd, sensing that they were seeing something wrong, something immoral, sat up in their seats and began screaming for the fight to be stopped.

But Esteves, absorbed in the action, allowed it to continue, and Hazzard, furious at what he was seeing, directed the ringside physician to Galvan's corner.

"A man who said he was the doctor told us to stop it," said Eric Jakubowski, Galvan's trainer. "We didn't know who the guy was. He just said he was a doctor."

The fight was mercifully brought to a halt at 2:22 of the fourth round, but the memory of what happened should be sealed, sent and delivered to every state commission who cares about the health of fighters.

The four-year anniversary of Beethavean Scotland's death came a day after the show, and the Galvan bout is a subtle reminder of what can happen when a fighter is allowed to inflict ungodly amounts of punishment on his opponent.

Luckily, Hazzard, in his 20th year as commissioner, acted quickly and responsibly.

"I could have stopped the fight if I had wanted to," he said. "But first I wanted to let the referee handle the situation. I was trying to get his attention. Then I asked the doctor to tell the corner to stop the fight. If that didn't work, then I would have stopped it."

Only the referee and the ringside physician have the power to stop a bout in New Jersey. But Hazzard, as the man in charge of boxing in the state, claims he could have ended the fight himself, which raises the question of, well, why didn't he then?

"Every situation is different," he said. "You want to see how things play out in the ring."

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But wouldn't it have been beneficial to Galvan if Hazzard had jumped into the ring, demonstrative as this sounds, and stopped the bloodshed immediately?

"It comes down to the referee's decision," he said. "They have to weigh the circumstances of the situation to decide what they want to do."

The entire show on June 25 should be scrutinized and used as an educational tool for the future. Twice on that date, fighters were hit while they were down on the canvas. Henry Crawford, a young welterweight from Paterson, New Jersey, took a swipe at Fernando Jimenez after he knocked him down and out in the first round. Then Carlos Maussa, an awkward, and now we know completely sadistic fighter, uncorked an overhand right while Vivian Harris was lying face down on the canvas. Luckily, the punch was deflected by the bottom rope or Harris might have been killed (seriously); the foul drew boos from the crowd but went unpunished; Crawford's infraction was also overlooked.

"Vivian was knocked out cold," Hazzard said. "Deducting a point from Maussa would not have accomplished anything. If anything, it would have exacerbated the situation. What's the sense in punishing him? The other guy was knocked out. That punch that knocked out Harris would have knocked out an elephant."

As far as what motivated Maussa, Hazzard said: "I don't know if it was the excitement of the moment, or what it was. Who knows what makes a fighter react when they're in combat? But it would have been useless to penalize the guy. Harris was already knocked out. It would have been unfair if Maussa had been disqualified [after winning the title]."

It would have been enormously unpopular too, but it has happened numerous times before. Roy Jones Jr., following his trance-like reaction where he hit Montel Griffin when he was down, was disqualified in the ninth round of that 1997 bout. As was Terry Norris after he hit Joe Walker when Walker was down in the first round during a fight in 1987.

"People say that because the punch didn't land that he shouldn't be punished, but he still attempted it," the fight agent Johnny Bos said of Maussa. "That's like me pulling out a gun and shooting at you and missing. What, just because I missed I shouldn't be punished? It's still attempted murder."

For his part, Galvan had never been stopped in his career and if the doctor had not intervened, the fight would have likely continued.

"I kept trying to buy us more time," said Kenny Angotti, the assistant trainer. "Yeah, he was having trouble, but you want to give your fighter the best opportunity to win the fight."

It seems almost criminal that fighters can take a bout on ten days notice, but that was the circumstance surrounding Galvan, who wasn't even sure what he was getting paid for his fight with Chavez; for his trouble, Galvan was suspended for 30 days by the commission, scuttling his plans two weeks later to fight in Marrisonville, Indiana.

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“I was surprised the fight wasn’t stopped earlier,” Jakubowski said. “Chavez is a tough kid. He wore Ruben down with body shots. At the end though, the referee could have stopped the fight. I don’t know. I think the doctor should be able to stop it or the commissioner. I’m the trainer, and I’m trying to win the fight, so don’t ask me to stop it. He should be able to jump into the ring and stop it if he feels it’s getting out of hand. Ruben always told me, ‘man, whatever is happening, don’t stop the fight, don’t ever throw in the towel.’”

The rules of the New York State Athletic Commission also insist that only the doctor and the referee can end a fight, but Ron Scott Stevens, the chairman, exclaimed that he could end things if he had to. If he ever does stop a fight, the losing fighter could file a protest because it’s a violation of the rules, Stevens said.

“If I think a fight should be stopped then I’ll instruct the doctor to stand up on the ring apron and get the attention of the referee,” he said. “If it’s something blatant then I will instruct the doctor to stop the fight. But that’s only happened once I think in my 2½ years as commissioner.”

Stevens was referring to a Broadway Boxing show on June 9 when Dmitriy Salita fought Louis Brown in the main event and during the bout Brown was bleeding profusely.

In between rounds, the doctor leaned over to Stevens and said he wanted to stop the fight; Stevens gave him his blessing and the bout was stopped after the seventh round.

Personally, I would like to see more commissioners step up and end fights.

Although Stevens is doing a commendable job as commissioner, valuable seconds elapse when conversations are had between officials at ringside. Maybe this is nitpicking, but a fighter who requires immediate intervention doesn’t have time for the officials in attendance to have a meeting.

They need immediate action.

Four-Rounders: One short note on the heavyweight, Samuel Peter, who is causing a lot of commotion with his popular knockouts of Jeremy Williams and most recently Taurus Sykes. Sykes, who has fought somewhat decent competition, fell asleep at the wheel and momentarily rested in front of Peter, who clubbed him with a shot on top of his head (was the shot legal?), which ended Sykes’ night early. I think the Williams knockdown was somewhat of a fluke, with Williams, again, relaxing at the wrong moment – right in front of Peter.

I would love to see Peter against a fighter who can punch and move, a guy like a Fres Oquendo or even someone like Dominick Guinn, who can take a punch.

So far the best fighters he has fought are over-confident ones who may have underestimated his power and Peter, to his credit, has taken advantage of their lapses in concentration. Let’s see him against a crafty veteran who is starting to slip.

It’s easy to second-guess a fighter after the fact, but what exactly was Arturo Gatti’s fight plan

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going in against Floyd Mayweather Jr.? Every fighter has a game plan, but it seemed like Gatti's was to box Mayweather and then catch him with a big shot. I would have given Gatti a better shot at winning if he had just come out throwing bombs, but we'll never know.

Forget about Ricky Hatton against Mayweather. What happens when Zab Judah fights Mayweather? More than a little trash talk.