

## Subjectivity and Bernard Hopkins

Written by Matthew Aguilar  
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Where in the rules of the Nevada State Athletic Commission, the WBA, WBC, IBF or WBO does it say that a champion keeps his title in a close fight? And why do people insist after every controversial decision that the rule exists?

Bernard Hopkins dropped the undisputed middleweight title to Jermain Taylor Saturday in Las Vegas. He wasn't robbed and the judges weren't drunk. Hopkins lost – because, for the first seven rounds, he didn't fight.

Oh, there were plenty of entertaining shoulder rolls, a few stiff jabs and fluid movement. But there was very little meaningful punching on the part of the 40-year-old Philadelphian. And, while the younger challenger wasn't exactly doing an Aaron Pryor windmill imitation, he was certainly throwing – and landing – more than Hopkins, whose punch output seemed to mimic Alfredo Evangelista.

Hopkins thought, like Oscar De La Hoya against Felix Trinidad six years ago, that, if the fight went the distance, he would get the decision. Regardless of how many early rounds he surrendered.

Wrong, Bernard. Your arrogance cost you. The younger man won more rounds early, when you were trying very hard to avoid that Taylor right hand that he was uncorking with frequency.

It appeared that Bernard didn't want to get hit early, when Taylor's power seemed superior. He didn't want to risk the knockout defeat.

So he stayed away; he waited to attack – until it was safe.

Only problem is that, when it was finally safe, he was behind on the scorecards.

Those Hopkins apologists who point to the “challenger must take the title from the champion” axiom should also consider another axiom: You can't win a fight backing up.

Which is what Hopkins did for the first seven rounds.

So Taylor didn't “take” the crown from Hopkins in the way that Marciano took it from Walcott or Tyson took it from Spinks. So what? Close, controversial decisions – and championships changing hands as a result of them – are as much a part of boxing history as Everlast trunks.

Holmes was close against Spinks. Qawi was close against Holyfield. And Hagler was close against Leonard. In the end, it didn't matter. They lost their titles. That's boxing.

Deal with it.

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During the middle rounds Saturday, the crowd booed lustily, when Taylor and Hopkins jabbed from ring center. Chants of “We paid \$250 for these seats?” were a common cry. Neither fighter was doing much. Which means the action was infrequent. Which means the rounds were tough to score. Which means that anybody who insists that one fighter deserved those rounds over the other, without acknowledging other possibilities, probably had money on the losing fighter.

(You don’t get a free pass for the 12th round, though, Duane Ford).

Yes, Hopkins has been a fine champion over the last decade. But he shouldn’t get rounds automatically because of it.

You listening, Jerry Roth? And ringside press?

Hopkins figured he’d knock the kid out. He didn’t expect Taylor to stand up to him once the fight got to the late rounds. He was depending on a late-round stoppage.

He almost got it in the 10th round, as Taylor was staggered as a result of Hopkins’ accelerated attack.

But, to Hopkins’ despair, Taylor hung in there. And never went down. And so the fight went to the scorecards – just as “Ex” probably hoped it wouldn’t.

In the end, the math didn’t add up for B-Hop. And he was at the wrong end of a close decision.

Some people need to look up the definition of “subjective.” It doesn’t mean “the champ wins every time.”