

Donaire over Harutyunyan on Showtime Boxing

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TEMECULA, Calif. – Nonito “The Filipino Flash” Donaire lived up to his billing as one of the top young fighters in the world and captured the vacant North American Boxing Federation (NABF) super flyweight title with a game, hard-fought 10-round split decision over Kahren Harutyunyan Friday on “ShoBox: The New Generation” on SHOWTIME.

Donaire (14-1, 8 KOs), of Castro Valley, Calif., by way of General Santos, Philippines, scored a second-round knockdown with a counter left hook en route to winning by the scores of 97-92 twice and 94-95. The physically gifted, powerful former amateur star turned back a determined late challenge by Harutyunyan despite injuring his left hand in the early rounds.

“It is the same kind of cartilage injury I suffered in my last fight,” said the RING magazine Prospect of the Month after his 13th consecutive victory. “I was in a lot of pain, especially after the seventh round. It made for me being off balance for a lot of the fight. I couldn’t use my left hand as much as I wanted, but I knew I had to keep trying to use it and fight through the pain. I give Kahren a lot of credit. He is a really nice guy and fought his heart out. But I definitely thought I won the fight.”

Harutyunyan (13-3-3, 0 KOs), of Glendale, Calif., by way of Yerevan, Armenia, is listed at 5-foot-4, but he might be closer to 5-2. With just a 62” reach, he seldom could get inside against the 5-6 Donaire, which -- along with the knockdown – may have been the difference. Harutyunyan possesses good boxing skills and knows his way around the ring, but his physical limitations were too much for him to overcome.

Still, he thought he had done enough to triumph.

“I am not going to say anything against the judges,” the visibly dejected boxer said. “I don’t know how it looked from the side of the ring. But I felt I did my best and came back strong. I know I won the 10th round big. I thought I boxed well and was aggressive when I had to be. I thought I did enough.”

Hernandez (12-1-1, 12 KOs), of Mazatlan, Mexico, suffered a cut near the left eye in the bout’s opening 30 seconds and fought the rest of the way with blood streaming down the side of his face. For the initial 2½ rounds of his United States debut, he seemed clearly outclassed and overmatched. But a left hand stunned Harris late in the third and it changed everything. A vicious left uppercut finished Harris at 1:16 of the fourth.

“For me to win my first fight in America like this makes me really very happy,” Hernandez said. “Not many people knew who I was before the fight but maybe they will now. I knew after the first round that I hit harder than him. This was definitely the biggest fight and biggest win of my career.”

Harris (14-1, 12 KOs), of Lansing, Mich., was ahead by the scores of 29-28 on the three

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judges' scorecards entering the fourth. The southpaw had easily outboxed the slower Hernandez from the outside during the first 7½ minutes and seemed headed to perhaps an easy triumph. But then he got rocked in the third and went down in the fourth. He beat the count and made it to his feet, but the referee stopped it.

"I am disappointed that I lost and disappointed I did not get the chance to go on," Harris said. "I got caught with a good shot. That kind of stuff happens. But I definitely felt I could continue. I have fought through adversity before. I know how to survive. If they want to do a rematch, let's do it. I will be back."

In addition to the rebroadcast on Saturday, Jan. 21, at midnight, Friday's bouts also will be replayed on SHOWTIME EXTREME Monday at 8 p.m. and Wednesday at 11:30 p.m. and back on SHOWTIME TOO Thursday at 11 p.m.