

Cyclops Last Stand

Written by Phil Woolever

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LAS VEGAS – The matter at hand got real ugly as Shane Mosley carried out his mission against Fernando Vargas Saturday night.

Mosley got the best of an entertaining, close battle after Vargas's left eye swelled to grotesque proportions during grueling inside action. Referee Joe Cortez waved the contest off at 1:22 of the tenth frame, after Mosley landed a big combination against his brave, blinded foe.

"Before I knew it, the eye was swollen like a balloon," said Mosley, who didn't earn the victory without taking plenty of punches himself. "I saw it grow and I couldn't believe it. He is a tough warrior. I was just trying to keep from falling down, he was leaning on me so heavy."

"It was a headbutt," complained Vargas, who looked like he could have continued although permanent optical damage was a definite concern. "He kept putting his head down. I would have rather gone out on my back. I was fine. I could see and could have continued. I was constantly on him and had him retreating."

True enough, but the price Vargas paid coming in was probably as much a deciding factor as the injury. Mosley flurried in heated response whenever Vargas tagged him and scored enough to deserve the lead on the scorecards.

The eventual outcome was uncertain much of the way, in a back and forth brawl that had the swarm of 9,237 at Mandalay Bay screaming.

Vargas seemed like the overwhelming crowd favorite as the fight began, but Mosley's stirring performance got many fans behind him. Chants for each man rocked the house with equal passion.

True hearts can be well defined through the resolve demonstrated by tonight's heroes.

Mosley pocketed a reported paycheck of four million dollars, while Vargas made three million. In terms of boxing action, they earned it.

Vargas kept his vow to attack, attack, attack.

Mosley backed up his prediction of a stirring victory by dealing with Vargas's effective aggression, using strength and speed to offset a furious ongoing charge. Vargas kept a stern game face on all week. Mosley saved his for Saturday night.

Vargas looked bigger, but, as Mosley maintained, was not more powerful.

Vargas leaned in behind big shots as Mosley shuffled away and countered underneath with good body shots as the fight unfolded. Vargas kept the contest close with continued pressure

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and Mosley was breathing heavier by the fourth frame.

Mosley continued to tap dance behind timing jabs and Vargas's face puffed up during the middle frames. Vargas willed himself to advance into the pain and turned the momentum his way.

Mosley may have been winded, but he always fired back when Vargas thumped him with potential tide-turning leather. The crowd was in a frenzy from the seventh session on.

Vargas came out for the eighth round as if he had plunked a mound of pink putty over his brow. It wasn't long before Mosley got him in trouble from the blind side and raked him with right hand retribution.

Vargas kept trying but started to look desperate. The masses moaned in unison as Mosley's right glove zeroed in again and again. Vargas still looked formidable in the ninth but no longer looked dangerous.

Prior to the tenth round, ref Cortez was involved in an animated discussion with Commissioner Marc Ratner.

As the round began, Mosley unleashed a flurry that caught Vargas up and down, including a short blast that appeared to connect directly on Vargas's vision. Cortez jumped in as Vargas protested in disbelief.

Many in the stands joined in his vocal despair, and offered loyal support during a raucous press conference. Quite a few of them had presumably wagered the other way.

Scoring at the time of the stoppage: Paul Smith and Chuck Giampa 86-85 for Mosley, Patricia Morse Jarman 86-85 Vargas.

"I absolutely ask for a rematch," said an unbowed Vargas, "He was timing the right hand but I was still weaving under it. You know what his mentality is if he says he's going back to welterweight. I haven't been at that weight since I was five years old."

"It sounds good, if a rematch gets made," said Mosley like it was a snowball's chance down below, "we'll have to wait and see. I said this was my last fight at 147 pounds. It was just a great fight. I don't know what else to say."

There's nothing else to be said, after another fine fight night, when the action, skill, and courage said it all.