

Mayweather-Judah and the Tricks of the Trade

Written by Phil Woolever
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LAS VEGAS - Zab Judah promised Floyd Mayweather Jr. there was a telltale trick waiting up the sleeve of Judah's boxing robe.

As it was, Judah gave Mayweather all kinds of legitimate trouble in the beginning of their heated welterweight contest before a frenzied crowd of over 15,000 at the Thomas and Mack Arena, but no one could have predicted the inflamed scenario that transpired during a tenth round melee that erupted after Judah landed a low blow, followed up by a hard thump to the back of Mayweather's noggin.

There were many raucous moments in which no one had a clue how things would turn out, but by the time the ringside tornado occurred, Mayweather was well ahead on the official scorecards.

When a semblance order was restored, the action in the ring was anticlimactic. Mayweather dominated the scoring, but the entire story won't be told until the Nevada Athletic Commission has an opportunity to review the tapes. A hearing was scheduled for Thursday.

"I didn't intend to hit him in the balls," Judah said. "That's not my style. We're the hottest fighters in the world and we should do it again. I didn't do anything wrong. I got contained by a police officer, and choked by Roger (Mayweather)."

"What happened, happened," said Mayweather, with no apparent hard feelings. "Me and Zab had our differences, now let's try and be positive. It was a truly blessed fight, I feel great. That's all I can say."

What happened as the fight was nearing a conclusion is hard to say without benefit of multiple replay angles. As the tenth frame was ending, Judah hit Mayweather with a clearly low blow, intentional or not. As Mayweather doubled over, Judah conked him behind the head with a huge shot.

Mayweather, in obvious distress, stumbled across the ring looking injured. Trainer and uncle Roger Mayweather charged into the ring, which preceded a flood of humanity from the opposite corner... even Joel Judah answered the call of the wild. A mass of bodies followed, and then things got real tricky as punches flew and the Las Vegas Metro Police took over the ring.

"There was just so much going on I couldn't really tell what happened," said Commission Director Marc Ratner. "I've never seen a cornerman jump in like that before. Evidently he lost his mind. I was told Roger was choking Zab but I didn't see that. The purses will be suspended until the films can be reviewed."

The contest itself featured excellent exchanges between two of the slickest technicians in the game. Judah came out with fire in his eye and had many observers thinking of a big upset

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surprise before Mayweather's combinations put him in charge during the middle rounds.

Judah feinted with his southpaw jab as Mayweather waited to counter with reach around hooks. Technically, Judah looked as proficient as Mayweather much of the way, but Mayweather kept his arms up in a tight defense and found the range over the top as rounds progressed.

Judah backed Mayweather up with some big lefts and used shoulder shifts to gain early momentum. Mayweather had some problems with Judah's equalizing speed as the fight began but won the battle of stinging jabs from the sixth session on. As the fight progressed it looked like Judah would eventually be overwhelmed, but he never backed down.

Official scoring: Dave Moretti 116-112, Jerry Roth 117-111, Glen Hamada 119-109, all for Mayweather.

Referee Richard Steele let the action flow without improper interference.

"I knew Zab would come out on his toes and be sharp," said Mayweather. "He brought his 'A' game and so did I. The game plan was to stay calm and study the guy. Zab is always strong in the first four rounds. I hurt my hand early, but I didn't want anybody to know so I kind of whispered to my corner. These type things happen in big fights."

Punch stats indicated Judah was busier, but nowhere near as effective. Once again, Mayweather demonstrated why he is considered by many the best active boxer at any weight.

Listening to co-promoters Bob Arum and Don King debating after the fight, a rematch seemed unlikely, but who knows. The audience was highly appreciative of the action, and as tonight proved once again, in boxing anything can happen.

Judah came into the fight looking for career redemption. He got it.

Mayweather came in looking to further his claim as the sport's pound-for-pound best. He looked like it.

The fans showed up looking for blazing exchanges in gutsy displays. They saw plenty and the assembled swarm left happy.

Mayweather, who displayed a positive attitude throughout the promotion, might have summed up the situation best, pending future rulings of course.

"Things like this happen in boxing," concluded Mayweather. "We fight through our problems and we're going to get by this. I thank Judah's family for their participation. Let's move on from here."