

Kissing Your Sister, Who Morphs into the Babe Next Door

Written by Phil Woolever
Monday, 22 May 2006 19:00

Most of the 10,167 fans in attendance at the Staples Center left the stirred up LA arena Saturday night concluding they had just seen an exciting, hard-fought, coulda gone either way type of contest between Marco Antonio Barrera and challenger Rocky Juarez. It certainly didn't seem like the initially announced draw was the most outrageous verdict that could have been handed down.

People still hanging around the mostly vacated purple seats after the blazing action had cleared, or those tuned in to the very end of the HBO telecast, found out that once again in boxing, things never seem to end up that simple.

After an incorrect scoring tally was discovered that gave a split decision to Barrera instead of the first deadlock on his record, many folks got the idea that a fine fistic fiesta had turned into another pugilistic case of smoke and mirrors.

"It was like it was his backyard," said the impressive Juarez before he got the bad news. "Getting a draw in California, with Golden Boy as his promoter, you could consider that a victory."

Just about. From the broadcast, it sounded as though many felt 3-1 underdog Juarez had done enough to capture Barrera's WBC Super Featherweight laurels, no small achievement.

What subsequently became the official scoring was 115 –113 and 115-114 for Barrera by Anek Hongtogkhan and Ken Morita, respectively, while Duane Ford saw it 115-114 for Juarez.

The fight itself was a legitimate, very close judgment call for most of the 36 minutes that it transpired.

The judges couldn't agree on even half of the rounds, seeing only frames 1, 4, 6, 8 and 10 the same. Fair enough, but even the scorecard paperwork distributed to media after the bout was hard to decipher, with some peculiar looking "10"s marked over on the even final frames listed by Ford and Morita.

It was that type of fight, but the adjusted tally raised legitimate questions, and took some of the shine off a fine night of boxing.

Juarez did a good job of working things out at his own pace even before he got in the ring, choosing to delay an early entrance after Jorge Barrios creamed Janos Nagy with a first round gut shot that put the main event well ahead of schedule.

Barrera controlled the early tempo but Juarez set the tone with a huge left in the second frame. Who was really ahead after that was anybody's guess.

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This may have been a case where an old European method of having only the referee scoring the bout might have told the story better. Perhaps ref Raul Caiz Sr. should have decided who was more effective inside the strands. It probably wouldn't have caused any more post-fight controversy.

Juarez pleaded his case to the media, many of whom expressed the opinion that the real life "Rocky" deserved the nod if anybody did.

"I had him going back from the first round on," said Juarez. "He was just trying to stay away."

Lumps and nicks on Juarez's face showed there was more to it than that, but the insult was worse than the injury.

"The main thing is that the fans are happy," said a bruised Barrera.

For the most part, that seemed to ring true. You can figure that most people who saw the first fight would want to see a second go. When all was said and done, it was a fight that demanded a rematch more than most similar situations.

Barrera's victory may have been tainted, but neither of the bloodied performers was. It was yet another instance where the boxers came through on their part with glorious flying colors. However, the institution they proudly represented flunked a simple test.

Let's hope it was nothing more than that usual old culprit, "human error," which in most likelihood appears to be the case.

Still, any time something like this little scoring blunder occurs, it adds up to more negative questions about the sport's integrity and subtracts from a wonderful occasion.

The fighters and the fans deserve better.

Do the math.