

Damian “Bolo” Wills Passes Heavyweight Test

Written by David A. Avila
Saturday, 10 June 2006 19:00

HOLLYWOOD, Calif. – Facing his biggest test yet, Damian “Bolo” Wills used his strength and speed to beat Cuba’s clever veteran Yamplier “Yankee Diaz” Azcuy (13-4, 8 KOs) in a heavyweight bout at the Henry Fonda Theater last week in a eight-round bout.

Not since the glory days of Hollywood boxing at the nearby Hollywood Legion Stadium – it is now a fitness center – has the tourist area seen a legitimate prizefighter worthy of earning the label of a real contender.

Get ready for Bolo.

Despite 19 previous wins and one draw, Wills was unproven and slightly tested. But after trading blows with Azcuy, a fighter who is the only man on the planet who can claim he knocked out the great Juan Carlos Gomez, Wills can say he passed the heavyweight gatekeeper and may be on his way to television fights next.

“I’ve always wanted to fight better fighters, I want to be tested,” said Wills, who stands 6-2 in height and weighs about 230. “It was great to fight someone that didn’t go down as soon as I touched them.”

Wills (20-0-1, 15 KOs) began the fight with a stiff jab as Azcuy countered with right hands to the body and head. Wills kept the pressure on Azcuy who slipped in the first round and twisted his knee slightly, but resumed the fight.

Diaz returned in the second round with an overhand right that stunned Wills. Azcuy moved in quickly but was unable to further hurt Wills. A three-punch combination by Azcuy scored to help the Cuban win the round.

Hollywood’s Wills jumped on Azcuy with back-to-back right hands, then followed with a left hook that dropped Azcuy. The Cuban claimed he was tripped, but the hook connected so referee Lou Moret ruled it a knockdown.

Proving the earlier knockdown was no fluke, Wills dropped Azcuy again with a left hook after an exchange in the fourth round. Though Wills appeared stunned by a right hand he was able to launch a left hook that dropped the Cuban to one knee. This time Azcuy didn’t dispute the knockdown.

Azcuy rebounded with his best round in the fifth as he pinned Wills against the ropes and fired more than three dozen punches, most short punch combinations. Though most of them landed, the California fighter survived the round. After that, Wills resumed to using his left hook as his primary weapon. Azcuy resorted to well-timed head butts.

“The head butt was his biggest weapon,” said Wills. “He hit me one time and it got me dizzy. His

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punches didn't get me dizzy but his head did. He should wrap a glove on his head.”

Repeatedly the Cuban professional, who fought more than 100 times as an amateur, would use his long arms to fling punches from awkward angles and keep the much more aggressive Wills from mowing him down. It worked enough to keep him from being overwhelmed.

“I thought I should have had him out of there,” Wills said while putting ice on a bump on the middle of his forehead. “But he used his experience to get me off of him. I give him credit, he's a clever fighter.”

Trainer and manager Terry Claybon said that Azcuay was a last-minute replacement because John Clarke was unable to fight. Azcuay stepped in willingly and Team Wills took the chance.

“I'm glad he took the fight,” Wills said. “It gave people an opportunity to see what I can do. I want to continue to show people what I can do.”

The judges scored it 77-73, 78-72, 79-71 for Wills.

It was a star-studded crowd with the Wayon brothers in attendance and several others. One latecomer was Academy Award winning actor Denzel Washington who arrived late and only heard the winner announced. “I had to work late,” said Washington, who has seen many of Wills fights.

Other bouts

Adrian “Turtle” Carrion (16-0-3, 9 KOs) of East L.A. obliterated James Johnson (20-22-2, 11 KOs) with a serving of double right hands that forced referee David Mendoza to immediately halt the super middleweight contest. Johnson tried to stand after the stoppage but his left leg was quivering. He walked out after a 10-minute check up by the ringside doctors.

James McKloskey (2-2-2) of Hollywood and James Harling (3-3-1) of Las Vegas fought to a majority draw in a heavyweight match.

Oscar “Snoop” Banuelos (2-0) of Los Angeles pleased his hundreds of fans with a unanimous decision win over Big Bear's Russell Moscrip (0-2) in a super middleweight bout.