

Clotley/Harris Victorious at Chumash Casino

Written by David A. Avila
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California judges favored Joshua Clotley in a welterweight showdown with Richard Gutierrez and Vivian Harris used his long reach to plow through a last-minute replacement at Chumash Casino in Santa Inez, California on Saturday.

In a fight featuring two fighters known for body punching, Clotley did enough to convince two judges he was the superior fighter and win by majority decision against Colombia's Gutierrez. There were no knockdowns but each fighter was deducted a point for low blows.

Clotley (29-1, 18 KOs) looked more comfortable engaging inside with the tough Colombian, but by the fifth round, the Ghanaian seemed to lose steam.

Gutierrez (19-1, 12 KOs) used winging blows to score to the body as Clotley began to hold frequently. Slowly the momentum changed but not enough to convince two judges who had it tabbed 116-112, 115-111 for Clotley; the final judge had it even at 113-113.

Top Rank's Bob Arum said the winner would get a shot at WBO Antonio Margarito. That could happen in November for Clotley.

In a junior welterweight contest, former WBA titleholder Harris (27-2-1, 18 KOs) was scheduled to meet Mighty Mike Arnoutis, but a training injury forced him to postpone. In stepped former lightweight world champion Johnston.

The spindly Harris dwarfed Johnston by six inches and seemed much more powerful and speedy. Near the middle of the first round a sharp right hand dropped Johnston. Then, with seconds remaining in the opening stanza, another right hand knocked down Johnston again.

Johnston (39-4-1) adjusted but was wobbled in the second round. Though he improved he just couldn't penetrate Harris's long arm defense and speedy right hand that landed on Johnston like a hammer. It would prove to be his downfall.

In the fourth round Johnston began holding on the inside but a quick right hand followed by a sharp left hook felled Johnston for a third time. He recovered the next round by holding and hitting.

"Are you tired?" Harris's trainer, Lennox Blackmoore, asked him.

After the fifth round, Harris landed shots that slammed against the 33-year-old Johnston's aging body. It was the beginning of the end for the southpaw stylist.

Though Johnston seemed to gain momentum, Harris seemed able to land big bombs whenever he desired. The biggest bomb came in the seventh round when the former champ from Guyana measured his opponent from a crouch and fired one single lethal right hand to the point of the

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chin. Johnston collapsed into the ropes from the blast. He rose slowly, but Harris decided to end the fight and unleashed a barrage of punches that forced referee Raul Caiz Jr. to do what Johnston's corner would not do, stop the battering at 2:15 of the seventh round.

"It was his night," said Johnston to HBO's Max Kellerman who asked if he would retire. "This could be the night."

Harris said his losses came from inferior team support. Now was different.

"It's the team," Harris cited as the main reason for winning.

Other bouts

Nonito Donaire (15-1, 9 KOs) stopped Jose Luis Cardenas (5-6) at 1:48 of the second round in a junior bantamweight bout.

Rolando Reyes (27-4-2, 17 KOs) scored a technical knockout over Victorio Abadia (22-5-2) at 1:15 of the fifth round in a junior welterweight fight.

Jose Antonio Ojeda (14-5-2) won by unanimous decision against Jose Manuel Buendia (13-1-1, 8 KOs) in a welterweight match. The scores were 78-74 twice and 77-75 for Ojeda.