

Peter Wins Controversial Decision Over Toney

Written by David A. Avila

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LOS ANGELES – Nigeria’s Samuel Peter won a controversial split-decision over James Toney at the Staples Center Saturday night in a heavyweight contest to determine the mandatory challenger to WBC champion Oleg Maskaev.

It was billed “No Risk, No Reward” as Toney defended his IBA title against the knockout puncher Peter (27-1, 22 KOS) in a 12-round match before 9,852 fans in downtown Los Angeles. Most expected Peter to win by knockout or lose by decision.

Toney (69-5-3, 43 KOs), the former middleweight, super middleweight, cruiserweight and heavyweight titleholder, had proven many times that his defensive skills and offensive knowledge were enough to offset any heavy puncher.

“I welcome the challenge. I like that,” said Toney about facing a dangerous puncher.

Though entering the fight at 257 pounds, the third heaviest of his career, the heavy-handed Peter managed to sustain a decent energy level against the elusive Toney. But many times he found it difficult to get a bead on the California-based heavyweight.

Peter’s best rounds were the third and fifth when the Nigerian was able to connect with his ax-like blows. Toney wobbled a bit and seemed dazed, but managed to escape further punishment.

During most of the fight, Toney was able to jab through Peter’s guard and by the fourth round, the big African fighter was bloodied but not deterred by the damage done to the nose.

Throughout the fight Toney landed resounding blows but Peter stormed back with a vengeance. At times both battled on the ropes but Peter’s corner would scream to “get off the ropes” lest Toney use his experience to rest while fending off the African’s big roundhouse punches.

“You all saw what I did against this man, he did nothing,” Toney said. “This guy wasn’t the Nightmare, he was the Sightmare with his face. I made him look like the Elephant Man.”

By the ninth round, Peter’s mouth was wide open from weariness as Toney chopped away at his opponent with quick left hooks and overhand rights.

“I was never hurt,” said Peter, who has never been stopped in a boxing match. “I’m solid like a rock.”

Despite taking some wicked blows to the back of the head, Toney survived and was able to step into another gear. A point was taken from Peter in the ninth round for hitting with two hands simultaneously – an illegal tactic – during a referee’s order to break.

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It didn't matter.

The judges scored it 115-112 for Toney and 116-111 twice for Peter. The crowd booed for several minutes after the announcement.

"I'm ready for Oleg Maskaev," said Peter after the fight.

Toney was shocked and angered by the decision.

"I took everything away from him," Toney said. "This is not over."

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In the semi-main event Robert "The Ghost" Guerrero powered his way to victory in a gritty nose-to-nose battle and captured the IBF featherweight title from Eric Aiken with a blistering body attack and nonstop punching. After eight rounds of sustained battering, Aiken's corner advised referee Tony Crebs to stop the fight and save their fighter.

"He was taking a beating," said Jerry Page, trainer for Aiken. "It didn't look like he was going to turn it around."

Guerrero had previously been scheduled to fight for a world title last year but was derailed by Mexico's Gamaliel Diaz. But the experience in fighting a tough, almost dirty opponent like Diaz, gave Guerrero another perspective on inside fighting.

"We did everything we wanted to do," said Guerrero (19-1-1, 12 KOs), who resides in Salinas, California. "I was in control of the fight the whole time. I did everything I wanted to do."

From the beginning Guerrero zeroed into Aiken's midsection with ripping left uppercuts to the body that left the titleholder gasping. After five rounds it was clear Guerrero was too powerful for Aiken who was defending his title for the first time.

"Everything was happening, I broke my hand," said Aiken (16-5, 12 KOs) of Marysville, Ohio. "I'm not taking anything away from him (Guerrero). All glory to him."

Guerrero promises to defend against all contenders.

"I want to fight the best guys," Guerrero said.

Other bouts

Florida heavyweight Michael Marrone (15-0) and Kentucky heavyweight Ralph West (16-9-1) wasted no time figuring out each other's style. Instead, the big-hitting guys unloaded on each other for three rounds of a scheduled six-round contest with Marrone proving to be more resilient. On two occasions West turned his back following right hands to the jaw. The first time it occurred the bout could have been stopped but it came seconds before the end of the second round. Marrone repeated the feat in the next round but this time referee David Mendoza

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stopped the fight at 55 seconds of the third.

Welterweight sensation Anthony Dirrell (10-0, 9 KOs) sped through six rounds of middleweight action against tough Bill Thompson (7-6, 3 KOs). It began quickly with Dirrell displaying overwhelming hand speed, but Thompson survived the first three rounds and slowly began to land punches as Dirrell slowed. After six rounds Dirrell was ruled the winner 60-54 by all three judges. It was the first time an opponent was not stopped by Dirrell.

In a strange heavyweight contest Travis Walker (21-0-1, 17 KOs) was ruled the winner by technical knockout over John Clark (12-8-1, 7 KOs) who turned his back. Referee Jose Cobian stopped the fight feeling that Clark was hurt or unable to continue fighting,

Female prizefighters Jessica Rakoczy (23-2) and Belinda Laracuenta (22-13-3) filled the arena with punches and counterpunches for two rounds, but a clash of heads opened up a gash over Rakoczy's left eye. The fight was stopped at 40 seconds into the third round by referee Raul Caiz. Because the fight did not go pass four rounds it was ruled a "no contest."