

Peter-Toney II: Hollywood Swingin'

Written by Phil Woolever

Tuesday, 03 October 2006 19:00

LOS ANGELES – Maybe the heavyweights ain't hopelessly stuck in Eastern Bloc high water after all.

In the interest of fair play and a finer fistic environment, officials at the WBC voted 21 to 10 for an immediate rematch of the September waltz in LA between Samuel Peter and James Toney.

Besides, with our new champion conking comrades already booked for the winter, the west coast USA homeboys didn't have anything better to do.

In an officially released statement some outlets ran as if it were composed for an unassociated press, the WBC listed a three-step logic to the Board of Governor's decision. It read like Jose Suliman verbatim.

Reason one cited "clearing the air." Step two defined how "at this time there can not be a more interesting heavyweight fight." Point number three said "Toney had no need to fight anyone to gain the right to contend for the title." That's what sanctioning fees are for.

Based on media and public reaction, maybe the WBC got it right. Maybe we should start scoring fights with a call in vote like "American Idol."

Right after the verdict went to Peter, Toney referred with bitter humor about how easy Marco Antonio Barrera secured what Toney professed was preferential treatment through Oscar de la Hoya. He demanded the same at the unusually contentious press conference.

"Now I'm gonna see what Dan (Goossen) and Don (King) are all about," said Toney, "if they're able to appeal with the big bucks and get me the big fights."

How far promotional power extends is an unknown factor, but one thing should be clear through any LA haze.

Samuel Peter was no thief at Staples.

Casual observers could get a different idea from how frequently Peter's name was preceded with the word "robbery" after the split verdict. Judging sparked any related guilt by word association. Accusations of scandal or gross incompetence swirled around the jovial Vegas Nigerian immediately after the draining duke.

"I am not worried about what some people may say," maintained Peter. "I am solid like a rock. He never hurt me. I believe I won. The judging was correct."

Toney begged to differ, and jeers at the verdict from the live audience proved he had plenty of backers.

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Still, Staples cleared out quickly without noticeable unrest. That could be a local thing, after-hours paranoia, or plenty of freeway time for the next scene. Any lasting controversy from the gate must not have dissipated as rapidly as the crowd, at least not to the WBC.

Maybe somebody did some good lobbying.

While I saw numerous more reasons to give Toney the nod, it's no contradiction to state the bout's decision was not so foul.

Peter – Toney was a fight anybody could see differently. I felt Toney did more than enough effective counterpunching to win, but I've got no problem if the judges didn't. If a fighter moves forward most of the fight, and initiates most of the action while consistently landing leather, I've got no problem awarding him points.

The most publicized ringside counts listed few exit poll votes for Peter. The response I witnessed (interior Staples Center floor/press room) indicated Peter carried around 30% of the vote.

There were plenty of boos as the decision was announced, but there was cheering too. Some fans booed during lethargic lapses in the last two frames. A bit of general discontent should probably be factored in.

I had the fight 117-112 Toney, with a fine view from Row D, center. There wasn't one of those intangible yet distinct auras of victory around either fighter.

I scored two rounds even. To those offended by "even" I offer this rationale – if both men stayed in the corner, it's even. You progress from there based on activity, but it can still be close (i.e.: each man throws one equal punch). Sometimes it's too close to call without depriving a fighter who's done just as much as the other.

"This could end up a draw," I said to myself out loud. Three wise men turned from their laptops and looked at me like I was crazy.

What stunk was the margin of victory on two cards. Even worse was that on those cards, Peter swept the last four frames. Total caca.

In the media center after the contest there was substantial support for Peter. There was also more heated debate. Toney definitely had louder characters for his cause.

Any talk of how busted up Peter was afterward can be dismissed by anyone who saw him beaming in the pressroom after the fight. What seemed to really sting Peter were the angry accusations he didn't deserve the win.

Dino Duva may have freaked out over Team Toney's refusal to concede anything, but Duva was right to protect Peter.

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An informal punch count of my own had Toney landing more than twice as many jabs, but Peter used his stick to more advantage. Many of Toney's taps were just well disciplined reflexes. On the other side of the coin, I couldn't tell from the Showtime replay, but Toney's big shots smacked in much harder live.

Another criticism of favoring Peter concerned technique over power. Not in this case, folks. Anybody can look fine shadowboxing in his corner. I'm giving points to whoever comes out and lands shots.

There was a lot of commotion in the immediate post fight Staples gut. Now that the gold dust has settled, it wasn't such a great gravy train robbery after all.

Whatever your opinion, don't hold it against Samuel Peter. He did what he was supposed to do, kept the pressure on against one of the best defensive fighters working. Whenever Peter got stung, which was quite a few times, he came back swinging.

Toney did the same, resulting in some excellent sporadic trades.

It looks like they'll bump heads again.

Episode one may end up as a rumble that goes into minor boxing lore as an unjust casting call. The sequel could well be a better fight, and the first one was quite all right.

Toney will get the opportunity to make harsh amends for any injustice he perceives from their initial engagement.

It could well be another case of careful what you wish for. In the progression from before Klitschko to after Toney, Peter substantiated to his camp's claim that he'll keep getting better. Recent form says Toney can't count on the same potential upside.

There was plenty of room for debate about who really won the first fight, but the record book isn't lying when it says Peter came out ahead.