

On Sunday, Milan Was Like New York

Written by Luca De Franco

Tuesday, 10 October 2006 19:00

Last October 8 in Milan, one of the biggest cards of the last ten years was promoted by Salvatore Cherchi. In the main event, Giovanni Parisi faced European welterweight champion Frederic Klose. Many journalists wrote that Parisi was much too talented for Klose, but I predicted that the Italian would win by KO. As a matter of fact, Giovanni was Olympic featherweight champion, WBO lightweight and light welterweight champion, defeated a long list of top-ranked opponents and fought twelve rounds with the legendary Julio Cesar Chavez. It was also a fact that Klose never accomplished the same goals. Probably, somebody translated the articles to Klose and he got so angry that he did what nobody believed that he could: the Frenchman put up a sensational performance attacking Parisi from the beginning, hitting him hard a few times and after twelve hard rounds at high rhythm looked fresh as he was coming off a training session. The point is that Parisi also threw hundreds of punches, hit Klose real well many times, even looked on the verge of knocking him down... but all this wasn't enough to put Klose in danger. Parisi did not underperform, he was in excellent physical condition, he was fast, he threw combinations and was willing to brawl even if that choice meant running many risks.

Parisi-Klose was an action-packed brawl that made the 2,500 fans in attendance go wild. I don't remember the last time when the Milanese people screamed the name of a boxer. Even last July 27, at Velodromo Vigorelli, there was a lot of enthusiasm, but nothing compared to the chants of "Giovanni, Giovanni, Giovanni" heard last Sunday. Watching a big crowd get wild, journalists came from all over Europe (there was also *L'Equipe*, which has a reputation as the best sports newspaper in the world), French TV station

Canal+

come with nothing less than Jean Claude Bouttier as technical commentator (Bouttier built a record of 64-7-1 between 1965 and 1974, became European middleweight champion and fought WBC/WBA king Carlos Monzon twice), a stellar ringside section crowded by outstanding soccer player Clarence Seedorf, karate legend Bruno De Michelis, current and past boxing champions (Cristian Sanavia and Sandro Lopopolo), high ranked executives of major radio and TV networks, I felt like I was at a big card in New York. When Marvelous Marvin Hagler showed up, making the people go even wilder (especially teenagers who weren't born when he fought), I said to a colleague: "I only saw such an exciting atmosphere at Madison Square Garden."

Even the people at home enjoyed the fight which was broadcasted by national network *Italia 1* starting at 11.15 p.m. According to the official numbers, an average of 1,346,000 spectators watched the fight (11.63 % of all TV sets in the country). The peak of the show came at 8:00 pm. with 1,732,000 spectators (20.50 % of share). Between 11:58 pm. and 12:13 a.m.

Italia 1

became the #1 network in the country. So much for the critics who say that boxing is dead in Italy!

When the speaker read the scorecards in Klose's favor (116-112 twice), nobody was surprised that the Frenchman had won decisively. Even Parisi's hardcore fans raised their eyebrows

On Sunday, Milan Was Like New York

Written by Luca De Franco

Tuesday, 10 October 2006 19:00

when judge Jesus Morata Garcia scored 114-114. After the loss, Giovanni said that he will retire. He said it many times, but never did it. I think that he should do it now. There's nothing better than hanging up the gloves after a great performance. There's nothing worse than watching a legend getting beaten up by some journeyman who is just younger and hungrier. That's what happened to many champions and it would be a shame if it happened to the best Italian fighter of the last 30 years. If you tell this to Giovanni, he will answer: *"I'm the best Italian boxer of all times. Nobody accomplished what I did."*

We all know that Nino Benvenuti was also an Olympic gold medalist and won the world title in two weight divisions (light middleweight and middleweight) and he did it when there were only two sanctioning bodies around (WBA and WBC), but you cannot criticize Giovanni because he really believes to be the best ever. If he didn't have a great opinion of himself, he wouldn't have reached any success. An old Italian saying is:

"No matter where you are or what you do, they will always criticize you."

Which means that you must believe in yourself and don't pay any attention to what the others say about you.

In the co-main event, European flyweight champion Andrea Sarritzu made his first successful defense against Christophe Rodrigues. They had previously fought twice: the first battle ended in a draw, the second one was won by Sarritzu. At the Palalido Sarritzu won again, but suffered Rodrigues' style just to point out one more time that styles make fights. After twelve rounds, Andrea got a unanimous decision (118-110, 117-111 and 118-110).

The much anticipated professional debut of three-time amateur world champion Simona Galassi, ended like everybody expected: 2nd round TKO of Simona Pencakova.

In his first fight after losing to Miguel Angel Cotto because of an injury to his left arm, Gianluca Branco disposed of journeyman Adam Zadworny in one round. The European Boxing Union named Branco official challenger of Euro light welterweight champion Ted Bami, but Gianluca has another desire. A third world title shot? Wrong answer. It's sure that he will fight again for the world title, but now Gianluca wants a rematch with Arturo Gatti. After the October 8 show, Gianluca told me: *"When Gatti knocked me down in the 10th round, the scorecards were even. I got up immediately and fought a fantastic 11*

th
round. The last one maybe was hard to judge. Then the announcer read the scorecards and I couldn't believe them: 116-111, 115-112 and 116-111 for Gatti. I know I beat him. Let's do it again and I will leave no doubts to the judges. Arturo fought three times with Mickey Ward, why he doesn't give me a rematch?"

In other supporting bouts, Angelo Valente made his pro debut with a TKO 1 win over Kornel Csesznyak, Vincenzo Finzi defeated on points Jozef Kubovsky, Cataldo Quero disposed in three rounds of Patrik Prokopecz.