UNCASVILLE, Conn. – There must be times when Mike Oliver amazes even himself. Surely when he views tape of his lopsided win over Adam Carerra at the Mohegan Sun Saturday night he will at least pause when he watches himself use Carrera's head for a speed bag, landing at least ten punches in the space of no more than three or four seconds early in the sixth round and wonder "How the hell did I do that?"

In what loomed, on paper, as the toughest fight of his career, the 26-year-old Hartford sprite was barely tested, hammering out a lopsided decision over his once-beaten California foe to run his pro record to 17-0. In the process, Oliver also won the vacant USBA junior featherweight title, which should in turn move him into the Top Ten of at least one sanctioning body (the IBF), and perhaps, if they are paying attention, into the others' as well.

Despite his tender years, Oliver has been boxing since he was five, and has been a veritable fixture around New England ringsides for two decades now. Never has he looked better. Throwing improbable punches from impossible angles and picking off Carrera's punches as if he were working the mitts with trainer John Scully, Mike-Mike piled up points, played to the crowd, and was never in danger from anyone other than himself. (Tony Chiarantino cautioned him for holding a couple of times, and appeared poised to take a point or worse when Oliver continued an enthusiastic battering after the bell had ended the tenth.)

"He's just emotional," pleaded Scully, and won his case with the referee.

Oliver had worked his wizardry from the outset, and at the end of the second landed a right hook that clearly wobbled Carrera. But Mike-Mike isn't a knockout puncher, and as the bout wore on he seemed to make a conscious decision to stop trying to end it early and put on a show instead, dazzling the audience, not to mention his foe, with rights thrown from every angle, laser-like left-hand leads, and twelve rounds worth of benumbing body shots.

Carrera had come into the USBA title bout 18-1, but he was never in this one, though God knows he never quit trying.

"It was speed, power, whatever I could use," said Oliver. "And the body shots affected him a lot."

Oliver's masterful performance was scored a shutout by one judge (George Smith; 120-108), while another (Don Ackerman; 118-110) gave Carrera two rounds. The third judge, John Mackaie, had it 116-112 for Oliver, while the Sweet Science card had Oliver in front 119-109.

While the USBA title guarantees contenderhood, it doesn't guarantee a title shot, but promoter Rich Cappiello said afterward that he hoped to have Mike-Mike fighting for a world championship in the first half of 2007. (Canadian Steve Molitor and Britain's Michael Hunter fight for the IBF 122-pound title two weeks hence in England. Off what we saw in Connecticut

Saturday night, we'd like Oliver's chances with either one of them.)

Cappiello's nine-bout marathon Saturday night literally represented two cards in one, or it will be by the time it reaches its television audiences. The first four bouts were taped for a NESN audience, with a separate broadcast crew (Ed Berliner and Mike DeLisa) and even a separate ring announcer (Wayne Soares). Then, at the conclusion of the Rodney Toney-Anthony Russell 10-rounder, the junior varsity was excused and replaced by a FOX SportsNet crew (Tom Tribor, Joe Lake, and yours truly), along with ring announcer Bill Carpenter.

(The halftime intermission also saw the Mohegan bull gang replace the ring canvas with a sponsor-appropriate version for the FOX telecast.)

In the co-feature (or the main event, if you're watching the NESN telecast, the 38-year-old Toney simply outworked his younger foe to post a one-sided decision over Russell, a Canadian light-heavyweight who had lost just once in 16 fights going into the bout.

The victory was the seventh straight for Toney (a cousin of former middleweight and cruiserweight champion James Toney), who hasn't lost since he was stopped by Ole Klemetsen in Denmark nine years ago. Now 29-2-2, Toney might not be the fighter who a dozen years ago beat world champion Charles Brewer and held William Joppy and Silvio Branco to draws, but he beat Russell to the punch for the first seven rounds and then coasted to victory over his frustrated foe.

Julie Lederman and Ackerman each scored it 98-92, while Mackaie had it 97-93, as did the Sweet Science. Russell fell to 14-2-1 with the loss.

The most dramatic upset of the night saw late substitute Edward Hemphill (6-5) register a third-round knockout over previously unbeaten Joe McCreedy (5-1) of Lowell, Mass. McCreedy had controlled the action in the first round and for much of the second before being caught by a Hemphill combination that dislodged his mouthpiece near the end of round two. Then, in the third, Hemphill unloaded a left to the body followed by a right hand. The first was probably responsible for putting McCreedy down, but the latter broke his jaw. McCreedy got to his feet and briefly attempted to continue before sinking to a knee and taking Chiarantino's 10-count at 2:47 of the round.

Trainer Norman Stone hustled the dejected McCreedy out of the ring, and he was shortly transported to Backus Hospital in Norwich, where x-rays confirmed the fracture.

A bit later in the evening, Tony Lamonica of South Boston, a newly-minted Boston police officer, raised his pro record to 3-0 with a first-round TKO of Worcester debutante Jason Crespo. In the first minute of action, Lamonica caught the 18-year-old Crespo with a hard left to the body. Wincing in pain, the teenager turned away, bringing the immediate intervention of referee Dick Flaherty, who held Lamonica off long enough to ask Crespo if he wished to continue. (He didn't.)

Crespo, suffering from a likely fractured rib, shortly joined McCreedy in the hospital, at which

point the Arena had exhausted its initial complement of ambulances, necessitating a delay while another was summoned so that the next bout could commence.

Tony Grano, the former USA Boxing heavyweight champion, went to 6-0-1 with a third-round TKO over a much larger Larry White (3-2). While it lasted this one was as good as it gets, with both big men trading nonstop leather until White walked into a short right hand in the third. Although he made it to his feet, Grano leapt on him and was battering his foe when Flaherty stopped it at 2:46 of the round.

Chris McInerney (6-0-1) of Stoughton, Mass. opened a cut above Rick Dufty's right eye early in the second and then floored him with a right-left combination later in the round en route to a runaway decision in their cruiserweight bout, as Dufty fell to 2-2. (Glenn Feldman and Julie Lederman both scored it 40-35 for the winner, as did the Sweet Science, while Don Ackerman had it 40-34.

Rhode Island super-middleweight Angel Camacho (3-0) floored 35-year-old Mike Walthier (1-5) of Bay City (Mich.) three times in the first round. Camacho decked Walthier with a right to the body followed by a left hook, then again with a right to the body that sent him to his knees. Then Camacho caught Walthier with a crisp right that sent him flying through the air just as the bell ended the first; referee Danny Schiavone waved the fight off before Walthier even landed.

Two other four-rounders saw Vietnamese-born Hawaiian Dat Nguyen win his fifth bout in as many pro outings, registering a TKO when Edwin Rosado cornerman Sean Fitzgerald stopped the fight to save his charge from further punishment after three rounds (Rosado is now 1-2), and Worcester's Enrique Palau (6-0) knocked John Gottschling down twice in the second, the last time with a body shot that caused Flaherty to stop the fight without a count at 1:17 of the round. Gottschling, another Bay City roller, fell to 10-13-1.

* * *

MOHEGAN SUN ARENA
UNCASVILLE, CONN.
OCTOBER 28, 2006

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: Mike Oliver, 121¼, Hartford, Conn. dec. Adam Carrera, 120¾, Cathedral City, Calif. (12) (Wins USBA title)

HEAVYWEIGHTS: Tony Grano, 214½, Hebron, Conn. TKO'd Larry White, 261½, Dothan, Ala. (3)

CRUISERWEIGHTS: Chris McInerney, 200, Stoughton, Mass. dec. Rick Dufty, 202½, Bay City, Mich. (4)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: Rodney Toney, 173¼, Boston, Mass. dec. Anthony Russell, 175, Kitchener, Ont. (10)

Edward Hemphill, 178, Woodbridge, Va. KO'd Joe McCreedy, 172¾, Lowell, Mass. (3)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Angel Camacho, 164, Johnston, RI TKO'd Mike Walthier, 165½, Bay City, Mich. (1)
MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Enrique Palau, 155, Worcester, Mass. TKO'd John Gottschling, 154¼, Bay City, Mich. (2)

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: Tony Lamonica, 138, South Boston, Mass. TKO'd Jason Crespo, 132, Worcester, Mass. (1)

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: Dat Nguyen, 127½, Maui, Hawaii TKO'd Edwin Rosado, 131¾, Worcester, Mass. (3)