NEW YORK – After boxing for six rounds as if he didn't own a right hand, Wladimir Klitschko suddenly smelled blood – his own. And once he began to bludgeon Calvin Brock with the right, Saturday night's fight at Madison Square Garden turned into the one-sided affair most had anticipated.

To his credit, Brock did his best – right up until he ran into that, you know, Stahlhammer thing. But Calvin had come into the fight billed as "the Boxing Banker." Nobody ever claimed he was a banking boxer.

It took him a while to turn on the heat, but once he did, in relatively short order, Klitschko stopped Brock in the seventh round of their main event at the Garden, retaining his IBF heavyweight title.

For the first round the fight was looking as if it might prove to be the utter mismatch some had feared. Only ten seconds had elapsed when Klitschko rocked Brock with a left hook, and half a minute later Brock fell to the floor – not from a punch, but possibly, one surmised at the time, out of sheer terror.

Having weathered the opening stanza, though, Brock became emboldened in the second, charging through Klitschko's jab to press forward with a body attack. It was the most effective round for the Boxing Banker, who won the round on the scorecards of judges Don Ackermann and Peter Treveterra, as well as that of the Sweet Science.

Brock continued to go after Klitschko's midsection in the third, which he won on one card (Luis Rivera's). Klitschko was during the early going virtually a one-handed fighter, strangely reluctant to throw the right – although he did do some damage with the paw whenever the two were locked in clinches, a condition which arose often enough that referee Wayne Kelly expressed his displeasure to both combatants.

As the bout wore on Klitschko began to find his range with jabs and hooks, but when Brock was, to the surprise of many, possibly including himself, still there after five rounds, chants of "USA! USA" began to reverberate through the crowd.

Early in the sixth Brock tried to bull-rush Klitschko again, only to have Dr. Steelhammer grab him like an octopus and yank him forward in order to unload another short-armed combination at close quarters. The clumsy tactic instead produced a clash of heads, and Klitschko came away with blood streaming from a cut above his left eye.

Although Stitch Doran was able to patch the wound in the corner between rounds, Klitschko acknowledged that the presence of the cut had produced "a little sense of urgency" on his part.

Emanuel Steward apparently felt the same urgency. Lip-reading has never been our strong suit,

but the Hall of Fame trainer appeared to tell Wladimir after the sixth to “quit f**ing around and go knock this guy out now.”

Klitschko, in any case, came out firing in the seventh, landing several crisp left-right combinations. Then midway through the round he unleashed a right-hand lead that staggered Brock in his tracks. Moving in for the kill, Klitschko caught Brock with another decent one-two, and then followed a stiff jab with a sweeping right that put him down.

Brock struggled to his feet by the count of eight, but appeared sufficiently unsteady on his feet that Kelly wrapped him in his arms and signaled the cessation of hostilities at 2:10 of the round.

Brock said later that he had seen the fateful punch coming.

“I just couldn’t get out of the way,” he ruefully admitted.

“I guess,” said Klitschko, “I should have tried that earlier.”

Although Brock’s supporters, as well as his newfound friends among the Garden audience, voiced their opinion that the stoppage had been precipitate, Kelly was well within his rights, and at the worst had only hastened an inevitable outcome.

“He beat the count, but his legs were wobbly and he wasn’t totally coherent,” said the referee later. “Under the circumstances I expected Klitschko would be throwing a lot of heavy punches and I didn’t think Brock could adequately defend himself.”

More significantly, noted Kelly, Brock himself did not utter a word of protest to contest a stoppage that had just handed him his first career loss.

“Wladimir fought a good fight,” said Brock. “He had a better jab than I thought he would. He’s very strong – and a good defensive fighter.”

“It wasn’t that easy,” said Klitschko, “but I was able to get into a rhythm as the fight wore on.”

CompuBox stats showed Klitschko landing 62 jabs to Brock’s 26. Brock had the edge in volume of power punches (51-28), but most of his were directed toward Klitschko’s body, and none of them came close in effect to the at least three right hands Klitschko landed in the pivotal seventh.

Klitschko raised his record to 47-3 with the win, while Brock fell to 29-1 in absorbing his first loss.

“I’ll be back,” promised Brock, who earned his first million-dollar payday.

So, promised the champion, will Klitschko. Asked what looms next on his dance card, he replied “I want to fight anybody who has a belt. It doesn’t matter which one.”

That must have sounded like music to Don King's ears.

As a substantial contingent of Ukrainians and Kazakhstanis celebrated around the arena, Klitschko hoisted himself up on all four ring-posts to acknowledge their applause. He seemed happy enough with his performance, and he did fight well – even if he wasn't in with much.

The dispassionate view would be that the jury is still out on Wladimir Klltschko. Even in a fight he essentially dominated, he seemed at times vulnerable, tentative, and, occasionally, just plain tired. (Klitschko was gasping air through his mouthpiece by the end of the third. It would have been interesting to see how his reserve might have held up had this one somehow lasted a few more rounds.)

With her father watching from ringside, Laila Ali posted a fourth-round TKO over a game but outclassed Shelley Burton to retain her WBC women's super-middleweight title. Referee Arthur Mercante Jr. rescued Burton with two seconds left in the fourth after Ali had followed a roundhouse right with a left-right combination, with a cowering Burton turning her back to her attacker.

Burton (8-3), who suffered a likely broken nose in the fight, complained that the stoppage was premature, but, Ali pointed out correctly, "she turned her back. In this business that's an automatic stoppage."

In an IBF-mandated lightweight title eliminator that matched a pair of former world featherweight champions with an aggregate 150 pro fights' worth of experience, 39-year-old Kevin Kelly returned to the scene of some of his greatest triumphs only to come away on the wrong end of a majority decision against well-traveled Mexican Manuel Medina.

Medina (67-16) won the last round on all three cards to outpoint Kelley (59-8-2). The winner eked out a 115-113 edge on the cards of Steve Epstein and John Mackaie, while Steve Weisfeld scored it even. The victory in the IBF-mandated eliminator earned Medina a crack at South African Malcolm Klassen.

Kelley claimed that Medina had been guilty of several head-butts, and conceded that the Mexican's style was even more awkward than he had anticipated.

Irish middleweight Andy Lee remained undefeated at 6-0, pitching a 60-54 shutout on all three cards (Glenn Feldman, Ron McNair, Tom Schreck) to capture a unanimous decision over Bayonne (NJ) vet Dennis Sharpe (17-3-3). Lee used a strong right jab to subdue Sharpe for most of the bout, but incurred a gash along his right eyebrow in the fifth round, which hampered his ability to see in the final stanza.

"I didn't box well," was Lee's self-critical assessment. "It was difficult, because whenever I tried to engage him he'd just move away."

"[Sharpe] was a difficult opponent, because he fought so cautiously," said trainer/manager Emanuel Steward in Lee's defense. "He was going to make sure he didn't get knocked out."

Lee had been scheduled to fight again on December 16 in, but Steward said on Saturday night the cut will likely forestall that plan.

In an all-Bronx junior welterweight battle, Frankie Figueroa knocked Joey Rios from the ranks of the unbeaten in winning a majority decision in defense of his New York state title.

There were no knockdowns, but Figueroa was the aggressor for most of the night, and managed to dislodge Rios' mouthpiece in the seventh round. Figueroa carried the night on the cards of judges McNair (97-94) and Schreck (96-94), while Billy Costello scored it even at 95-95. Rios is now 14-1.

"I'm the best in the Bronx and the best in New York City," said Figueroa (14-2), who was cheered on by a substantial rooting section. "I talked the talk and now I walked the walk. This was a big win for me. It probably means I won't have to borrow any more money."

Former Boston College defensive lineman Derrick Rossy outpointed Shannon Miller in a bloodbath to retain his New York State heavyweight championship. Rossy suffered a cut above his left eye (from an accidental head-butt, ruled referee Charlie Fitch), which kept cutman George Mitchell busy for the rest of the night. Miller had been busted up below his left eye earlier in the fight, and Rossy regularly tenderized the wound thereafter.

"He was tough as nails," said Rossy of his opponent. "I'd intended to box, but I got drawn into Miller's tough-man style. He was tougher than I expected."

Rossy (15-0) won all ten rounds on the cards of Feldman and McNair (100-90), while Schreck gave Miller the fifth and eighth in scoring it 98-92. Miller's record fell to 14-3 with the loss.

In an earlier bout, Brooklyn light-heavyweight Reggie LaCrete made a successful pro debut, winning on a TKO when opponent Denys Lozada (2-1) retired at the end of the third.

The happiest guys, or at least the happiest non-Ukrainians, in New York Saturday night had to be Vinny Maddalone and Marcus McGee. The card was to have included eight bouts, but with one prelim going the 12-round distance and two others going ten, the swing bout between those two heavyweights never made it into the ring, meaning that Maddalone and McGee each collected a paycheck without even having to get hit.

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WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP
MADISON SQUARE GARDEN
NEW YORK
NOVEMBER 11, 2006

HEAVYWEIGHTS: Wladimir Klitschko, 241, Kiev, Ukraine TKO'd Calvin Brock, 224½, Charlotte, N.C. (7) (Retains IBF title)

Derrick Rossy, 245, Medford, NY dec. Shannon Miller, 227½, Troy, NY (10) (Retains New York State title)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Laila Ali, 166½, Los Angeles, Calif. TKO'd Shelly Burton, 164, Kalispell, Mont. (4) (Retains WBC Women's title)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: Reggie LaCrete, 174½, Brooklyn, NY TKO'd Denys Lozada, 172½, Nanuet, NY (3)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Andy Lee, 160, Limerick, Ireland dec. Dennis Sharpe, 162½, Bayonne, NJ (6)

JUNIOR WELTERS: Frankie Figueroa, 139½, Bronx, NY dec. Joey Rios, 138¾, Bronx, NY (10) (Retains New York state title)

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: Manuel Medina, 129¾, Nayariet, Mexico dec. Kevin Kelley, 129½, Flushing, NY (12) (IBF eliminator)