

Iceman Stops Tito Ortiz Win Streak

Written by David A. Avila

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LAS VEGAS—UFC light heavyweight champion Chuck “Iceman” Liddell’s fists proved too much for Huntington Beach’s Tito Ortiz who was stopped in the third round before a sold out crowd at the MGM Garden Arena on Saturday.

The punching machine Liddell (20-3, 13 KOs) repeated his victory in UFC 66 over the much-improved grappler Ortiz who has improved his punching and blocking. Ortiz was trying to avenge his loss of April 2004.

Despite all the new weapons displayed by Ortiz it wasn’t enough as Liddell pummeled the former champion and retained his title with a technical knockout at 3:59 of the third round. Referee Mario Yamasaki stopped the bout.

“This was the most satisfying victory of my career,” said Liddell, 36, of Santa Barbara. “Tito came back real tough.”

Ortiz (15-5, 8 KOs), a former wrestler, worked on his boxing technique knowing he would need it against the former boxer Liddell. But Liddell’s experience allowed him to find the right moment to pounce on Ortiz.

“I had him hurt, I just kept throwing punches,” said Liddell who also knocked down Ortiz in the first round with a left hook.

Ortiz was gracious in defeat.

“Chuck is the best fighter Pound for Pound in the (mixed martial arts) world,” said Ortiz, 31, who suffered a gash on the side of his left eye from a punch. “I’m disgusted by myself. I let my fans down.”

Other bouts

Underdog Keith Jardine (12-3-1) knocked out Forrest Griffin (13-4) at 4:41 of the first round in their light heavyweight showdown. A right uppercut followed by a left hook wobbled Griffin who was sent to the floor by a barrage of punches. On the ground Jardine landed right after right until referee John McCarthy stopped the fight for a technical knockout.

“I couldn’t believe he was hurt,” said Jardine about Griffin who is known for his resiliency. “I was so nervous coming into this fight, but now I know I belong here.”

Canada’s Jason McDonald (18-7) choked out Chris Leben (15-3) in a middleweight bout that was up for grabs. Though Leben seemed to control the fight with stunning left hands, once the fight went to the ground McDonald managed a chokehold at 4:03 of the second round. Referee Steve Mazagatti saw Leben was unconscious and stopped the fight.

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Former UFC heavyweight champion Andrei Arlovski (12-5) caught Brazil's Mario Cruz (2-2) with a sneak right hand while both were tangled on the ground. Then the Belarusian pummeled Cruz until referee Herb Dean stopped the fight at 3:15 of the first round.

Third season winner of the Ultimate Fighter television reality season Michael Bisping (12-0) of Great Britain won by technical knockout over Eric Shafer (9-2-2) at 4:29 of the first round. A knee knocked Shafer groggy then Bisping knocked him to the ground and pounded him. Referee Mario Yamasaki stopped the bludgeoning.

Thiago Alves (16-4) caught Peru's Tony De Souza (15-5) with a knee as he attempted to dive for his legs in a welterweight contest. After that it was pretty much over as Alves pummeled De Souza at 1:10 of the second round forcing referee John McCarthy to halt the bout.

Gabriel Gonzago (7-1) proved too strong for Carmelo Marrero (6-1) in a heavyweight bout. At 3:22 of the first round Gonzago of Massachusetts manipulated his way into arm bar forcing Pennsylvania's Marrero to tap out.

Japan's Yushin Okami (19-3) pounded Georgia's Rory Singer (11-6) into submission at 4:03 of the third round of a middleweight bout. Okami seemed the more-rounded fighter with effective kicks to the head and more accurate punching.

Christian Wellisch (8-2) jumped to a quick start with an accurate left hook that rattled Australia's Anthony Perosh (5-3) in a heavyweight bout. During the first round it seemed the Sacramento fighter might end the fight but the Aussie hung tough. Wellisch won by unanimous decision.