

Holy Heavyweights! Vander Beats Lou

Written by Michael Woods
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It's not as easy to comprehend when you're not middle aged, but just because you're sprouting a few gray hairs, and your waistline is going toe-to-toe with your age, it doesn't mean that you've ditched your dreams and live only in the realm of reality.

Two fortysomethings who haven't ditched the dream of being the champ faced off in a Texas ring last night and the older of the stubborn dreamers, Evander Holyfield, came away with the win in a fight that featured a solid dollop of action and drama, more than a cynic might've expected.

The 44 1/2 year old Holyfield notched a unanimous decision victory, over 41-year-old Lou Savarese, and the aging process, and he lives to dream on, and fight another day as he works to secure a fifth heavyweight belt since turning professional in 1984.

The judges saw a 99-87, 98-90, 96-91 fight, and Lou smiled afterwards, content with the arbiters' rendering at the Don Haskins Center at the University of Texas at El Paso.

Holyfield's record rose to 42-8-2, while Savarese drops to 46-7 as a pro.

In the tenth round, the crowd chanted "Holy, Holy" as Vander had Lou on the ropes to start the session. His jab was slow and soft, and Holy pressed forward, wanting to close the show in a climactic way. A left hook sent the part-time actor to the ground but that was ruled a push. Holy had Lou slammed into the corner and launched combos that had the loser almost out on his feet. His reserves almost at empty, Lou still looked for that lucky uppercut to turn the tide but it wasn't to be.

In the ninth round, Lou knew he needed a KO, so he worked combos. But Holyfield isn't the statue that had RS Stevens yanking his license in NY, he was slipping the shots. Lou tends to shoot his shots too widely, but he was still tossing, for the record. Holy tossed a heavy duty left hook and Lou hit the deck, but got up at seven, and the bell rang to end the ninth. Holy dropped Lou's hands with a right to the breadbasket and followed in crafty fashion with a tight left hook that sent Lou down.

In the eighth, both had more juice than might be expected. Holyfield still bounced, and while he couldn't pull off a late inning flurry, he may have been in a 10-10 session.

In the fourth, Holy scored a knockdown, and it looked like Lou wouldn't last long. The knock came from an overhand right to the chin that started the pain, a left hook follow, and then about 12 unanswered cracks that sent Lou down to the mat. Savarese isn't overly adept at surviving, but he clinched and grabbed well enough to stay in the fight.

Lou drove Holy back three steps with a right uppercut that had Evander hurt in the third round. He was lifted off the canvas, actually, from the force of the blow, but got his legs and brain back

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into acceptable form quickly.

In the first, the two men checked each other out, and got the joints lubed. Holy's jabs looked a little peppier. Evander's legs looked in decent form off the bat, while Savarese, not known for his fleet foot, looked to be regulation Lou.

"Lou was difficult and cagey," Holyfield said afterwards. "I thought it would be easier fighting inside and he kept catching me with bodyshots and uppercuts and it was dangerous and awkward and I realized I wasn't comfortable fighting inside."

He gave himself a 70 out of 100 in this outing, and said the bouncy ring hurt his legs, as he wasn't able to set his feet like he would've liked. "The ring was a little too springy for the combinations," Evander said. "He fought hard and the people got their money's worth."

Savarese afterwards said, "I tried my best, it was a good fight. He's got a lot of heart and came back after the third, he's a warrior. He got a lot of skill."

He said he'd talk to his wife about continuing, or calling it a career and pursuing the acting gigs.

Overall, the bulk of the card was woeful, not really worth recounting, but the two oldsters just about made up for it.