

## P4P Player Calzaghe Beats Kessler

Written by Michael Woods  
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Sure, he sometimes slaps, instead of throwing meaningful punches with zing.

Yes, Joe Calzaghe tosses looping strikes, from funny angles, and he may not always look exceedingly graceful doing it.

But with his unanimous decision win over Mikkel Kessler on Saturday evening in Wales, Calzaghe, be he a slapper or not, has cemented himself a spot in the top five of the game's pound-for-pound list.

It took Calzaghe a few rounds to figure out what he had in front of him, which was a basic (in a good way and a bad way), sturdy, straight ahead sort who could be outboxed.

Calzaghe's jab was effective throughout, as he tossed it in Kessler's face non-stop, and upset the Dane's rhythm. Kessler to be sure landed some good cracks, and was still working to toss a home run shot in the twelfth round.

The judges saw it 117-111, 116-111, 116-111, and I saw it 117-111. The fight was a bit closer than those wide scores indicated, especially if you deem Calzaghe's punches to be of the "slap" variety.

Kessler found a home for his right uppercut against the lefty, but Joe tightened up in the second half and cut off that option.

He never did manage to convince the crowd or the judges or probably himself that youth was on his side, as Calzaghe looked mighty fresh all the way through.

The most curious section of the bout took place with 30 seconds to go in the eighth. Calzaghe piled up some slaps, and had Kessler buzzed. The Dane held on, and Joe clubbed him behind his head twice to get him to break. Referee Mike Ortega grabbed Calzaghe, yanked him away and chided him. That interlude bought Kessler about eight seconds, an eternity if you're drowning in a sea of strikes.

The stats weren't any kinder to the Dane than the judges were. Calzaghe landed 285 of 1010 throws, a fairly crappy 28% margin. But his foe threw only 585 punches, and connected on 173, a paltry number.

Kessler's stock doesn't dive with the loss, but he needs a higher caliber corner, for starters, if he hopes to recoup and climb upward and onward.

Calzaghe is 44-0, while Kessler finds himself 39-1.

Calzaghe, slapper or not, should now come to the US, away from that home cooking, and see

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how he handles an "away game."