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After Jose Armando Santa Cruz finished 12 frames against WBC lightweight titleholder Joel Casamayor the judges announced a split-decision victory for the famous Cuban boxer. Jaws literally dropped across America.

“It was one of the worst decisions I’ve seen,” said Rudy Hernandez trainer and manager for the soft-spoken Santa Cruz. “I haven’t seen anything that bad since Mando Muniz lost to Jose Napoles.”

Though it was apparent to many at Madison Square Garden and millions watching the fight on television, nobody felt the fight was close let alone a victory for Casamayor. Two judges found Casamayor the winner 114-113 twice and 114-113 for Santa Cruz. But the fans and boxers did not.

It’s one of those decisions that raises a big question on the credibility of those judging fights and the future of professional boxing itself.

“This fight should be investigated,” said Hernandez who plans to file a formal complaint.

It was ironic that Hernandez mentioned Muniz’s fight with Cuba’s Napoles three decades ago as another terrible injustice. Muniz himself saw the fight between East L.A.’s Santa Cruz and Cuba’s Casamayor.

“That was a terrible decision,” said Mando Muniz who lives and works in Riverside, California as a schoolteacher.

It was in March 30, 1975 when after battering and bloodying Napoles for 12 rounds in a 15-round fight, the referee stopped the fight and the win was awarded to the Cuban fighter though according to the rules the win and the world title should have been awarded to Muniz. The injustice by the WBC was never over-turned.

To this day it remains one of the most egregious injustices in boxing.

Ironically the WBC is also involved in the fight with Santa Cruz and Casamayor.

“I thought it was just a formality that Santa Cruz would get the decision. But when I saw Casamayor’s hand go up I thought what the heck happened,” said Muniz who watched the fight on television with several friends. “He (Santa Cruz) won that fight hands down.”

Before the fight began many experts picked Casamayor to win easily against Santa Cruz who had failed in two previous world title bids. After all, the Cuban had beaten the late Diego Corrales a year ago and many felt Santa Cruz was a whole level below “El Cepillo.”

But as soon as the bell sounded it was the Mexican-American fighter who took control and forced Casamayor to resort to holding throughout the fight with impunity. It's almost impossible to understand how the judges could see Casamayor winning the fight when it was his head that was snapped back many, many times. He had moments, but they were very few. One thing he did do was hold.

"I ran into the referee (Steve Smoger) on the elevator and asked him cordially how many times someone is allowed to hold without being penalized," said Hernandez regarding Casamayor's constant holding without being warned or penalized. "He didn't say one word."

Former world champion Antonio Tarver, who saw the fight on television, said the result should have been an easy decision win for Santa Cruz and blames poor judging for the result.

"The (New York Athletic) Commission needs to go out and look at these judges. All three of these guys in the Casamayor fight ought to never be allowed to judge again," said the outspoken Tarver who has been on the receiving end of bad calls. "These are people's livelihoods they're affecting and it's just not fair."

Santa Cruz scored a knockdown in the first round with a punch to the shoulder that caught Casamayor off-balance and down he went. Though it wasn't what anyone would call a true knockdown, it should have given the East L.A. fighter a two-point lead in the very first round.

The extremely skinny Santa Cruz seemed to get the better of the Cuban fighter for at least eight of the 12 rounds.

"My fighter was pressing him and landing more punches," said Hernandez. "I don't know what the judges expect. He won the fight easily."

The former Southern California crowd-pleaser Muniz, who is now a member of the World Boxing Hall of Fame, felt Santa Cruz was the true winner of the contest.

"It was an easy fight to score," Muniz said.

After all the fights were concluded, including the main event between Miguel Cotto and Shane Mosley, a post fight press conference was staged. Santa Cruz and his team were not invited.

"Oscar De La Hoya is always talking about fixing boxing and helping the fighters," Hernandez said adding that De La Hoya was involved in two fights that he lost causing controversy including the second fight with Shane Mosley and the fight against Felix Trinidad. "I hope Oscar realizes that my fighter has suffered a loss he didn't deserve."

Hernandez wants the judges to be scrutinized for their poor judgment calls and perhaps removed as judges for title fights.

"My fighter's future is at stake," said Hernandez. "This isn't about me but my fighter. He won that fight and the title and they took it away from him. Casamayor didn't take it away, it was the

judges."

Hernandez is waiting for his promoters Golden Boy to aid him.

"We deserve a rematch, that's a solution," Hernandez said.

Fights on television

Thurs. Versus, 6 p.m., Jesus Soto Karass (17-3-3) vs. Juan Buendia (14-1-1).

Fri. Telefutura, 8 p.m., David Lopez (32-12) vs. Darryl Salmon (16-2).

Fri. Showtime, 10 p.m., Andre Ward (13-0) vs. Roger Cantrell (12-0).

Fri. Telemundo, 11:30 p.m., Francisco Figueroa (17-2) vs. Noel Rodriguez (13-1).

Sat. HBO, 9:45 p.m., Joan Guzman (27-0) vs. Humberto Soto (43-5-2).