

Judges See Malignaggi The Winner In AC

Written by Michael Woods
Friday, 04 January 2008 19:00

On Friday, I called for upsets as part of my resolution package for 2008, and I wondered if Showtime would provide one on Saturday night in Atlantic City.

Many in attendance were certain that Herman Ngoudjo had done enough to take away Paulie Malignaggi's IBF 140 pound belt, but the judges didn't see it that way at Bally's.

After 12 rounds of action, the call came: 115-113 from Steve Weisfeld, 116-113 from Ken Chevalier, and Al Bennett saw it 117-111, all for the New Yorker, the mouthy Malignaggi.

TSS scored it 6-6, as Paulie looked to be the busier; he won the jab war, but Herman landed the harder shots, and pressed the action. Certainly, no one in attendance would've been too surprised if Ngoudjo had a two point edge at the end of the night.

That said, there will be no calls for mandatory eye testing from the judges, or calls for a federal probe. Neither man pulled away, and thus, it was left to the eye of the three important beholders to call a winner.

The Bennett card, however, looks to be far too generous to Malignaggi, perhaps even Paulie would agree on that. Al Bennett, you are on the TSS Watch List...

The bout, the first "name" broadcast of 2008, was featured on Showtime.

The Brooklyn resident Malignaggi entered with a 23-1 (5 KOs) record. The 26-year-old from Brooklyn weighed in at 139 pounds, while the Cameroon-born challenger Ngoudjo (16-1, with 9 KOs coming in), now living in Canada, weighed 140 pounds on the dot.

"I felt I won the fight, it wasn't one of my better performances," Malignaggi said. He expected Ngoudjo to lead more, instead of counter, he said, and thus had more trouble than he expected from the awkward challenger. He said seven months off didn't help his reflexes. "In one round he did buzz me a little bit," he conceded.

"I feel I won the fight, but I know he's the champ, I appreciate that," Ngoudjo said. He agreed with questioner Jim Gray, who wondered if the all-American judging crew worked against the loser. "It's OK, I got to come back," he said.

Paulie said he'd do a rematch, if the money made sense. "I want to get the money fights," he said, citing his injury history.

In the 12th round, Ngou was throwing with ill intent. He landed a sharp jab, and he kept in Paulie's face. He basically told the judges that he wanted the fight, and the belt, that much more. It was one and done repeatedly for Paulie, who certainly didn't resolve to start the new year off in this fashion. The 6 to 1 favorite then waited for the judges' call with some concern in

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his eyes, as Ngou grinned, certain he'd done enough to take the belt.

In the 11th round, both main came out with energy. Paulie's right shoelace needed re-tying, and the action re-started. Paulie looked to land a right upper, a late-fight fave for him, but came up short. Ngou got close, and tapped his foe. He looked to be the more active of the two men, even if no bombs landed.

In the tenth round, a Ngoudjo fan had to be worried, that their man was letting a semi-sure thing slip away. He basically stopped throwing, and simply spent too much time pursuing fruitlessly. In the last third of the round, he upped the ante, but maybe not enough for an out of towner coming into the champ's turf.

In the ninth, Paulie posed more than pumped that jab, and we wondered if there was a hand injury affecting the New Yorker. Ngou's own work rated receded here, but the round was still tight, and up for grabs.

In the eighth, Paulie came out looking fresher than his foe, perhaps realizing things were slipping away. He looked more alert, and vibrant, but still ate a couple of left hooks. There was a mean unintentional clash of heads, but luckily no slice or swelling resulted.

In the seventh, Ngou came out with a right hand bomb, which scored, and looked flashy, as Paulie's sweat and water beaded on his head flew off furiously. Another right send liquid spraying, and Paulie fans had to be worried. Ngou's muscle edge came to a head, as inside, he was able to exert his will. He threw punches in pairs, and then added another one or two for good measure. Still another lead right landed, and then another, in a wide Ngou round.

In the sixth, the action started out with a pro Ngoudjo flavor--there were clinches, and the challenger did well in close. The crowd chanted "Paulie, Paulie" but that lasted for about five seconds. Where was the excessive work rate, the jab-athon one expects from the light-fisted Brooklynier, they had to wonder.

In the fifth, Paulie pumped the jab with renewed vigor. A break occurred with a minute to go so Paulie could get his shoelace tied. Could he get his strategy tuned up, too, we wondered? Ngou answered with another hard right, over Paulie's waist level left. His trainer told him not to listen to the crowd after the round ended, and suggested he look out for Ngo's right hand.

In the fourth, Ngou, trained by Howard Grant, brother of the more famed Otis, sent Malignaggi to the floor, but it was from a push. The challenger pressed the pace. and surely the judges had to give him credit for his aggressiveness. Also, his defense seemed better than advertised. He slipped well, and tied up when need be. Paulie's cutman worked on a little slice over his left eye after the round.

In the third round, some swelling appeared on Paulie's left eye, signaling that Ngou's tosses weren't all errant. The Canuck landed a solid right to the chin, and Paulie had to be surprised by the handspeed possessed by the challenger.

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In the second round, Malignaggi, cornered by Buddy McGirt, the distanced tightened some. Ngou tried to lead, and found it hard to hit his target, as Paulie jabbed profusely.

In the first round, Paulie came out pumping the jab. He took advantage of the 20x20 ring, as well as the drum-tight canvas, to move and stick, move and stick. The ultra-elusive New Yorker cracked a sneaky hook to the head to change the pace two minutes in. He flurried Ngoudjo on the ropes, and the pro Paulie crowd roared.

Paulie may need to come back with a more impressive outing next time out, if he's to land a fight with Hatton, or some other bright light, and get the dough and spotlight he desires.

Or, perhaps, this outing may have helped Team Paulie in the long run. Cause you got to believe Team Hatton, seeing this, would think they have zero to fear.

But first things first, in a fair and equitable world, Ngou should get a rematch. This one was close and controversial enough to warrant that.

Um, this is a fair and equitable world, isn't it?

Jay Gone will have an undercard report on Sunday.