

ANOTHER UPSET: Bundrage Ousts Ouma On FNF

Written by Phil Woolever
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In some ways, to be a contender, you have to be a survivor. Round after round. Day after day.

Then again, surviving often translates out as nothing more than staying in contention for the grand scheme of bigger things.

On Friday night, Cornelius Bundrage emerged from an upper echelon crossroads type encounter by earning a close, unanimous 10 round decision over faded Kassim Ouma, and survived as a junior middleweight contender.

If you looked at the most basic roles heading into their clash at Seneca Allegany Casino in upstate New York, former kidnapped child soldier Ouma was cast by the whim of destiny in a survivor's position at an early age.

"K-9" Bundrage got his mainstream notoriety as a standout in a season two of "The Contender" reality series.

It seemed perhaps roles had been reversed. Ouma appeared to be the real contender. Coming in, Ouma's resume was far more substantial than Bundrage's.

In fact, the disparity in previous quality of opposition was so clear, it seemed like Bundrage should be cast in survival mode.

Once the bell rang of course, fistic fates rolled their own dice and things played out in designated character on the ESPN Friday Night Fights featured contest.

You could make a movie out of Ouma's life journey so far. They did, as a matter of fact. Excerpts from "Kassim The Dream", soon to be released, looked intense. In terms of Ouma's boxing trip, Friday night was no highlight reel.

Talk about clinching a victory. There was more holding than hitting. Bundrage looked stiff as a board but controlled enough of what action there was to take the Sweet Science card by a point or two.

Bundrage came out quick behind straight lefts. Ouma kept too much of a defensive posture for most of the fight, and leaned in without effective punches.

Bundrage scored a slim margin of points as the crowd grew increasingly restless with the sloppy mauling.

Bundrage shoved Ouma back without landing much. When Ouma tried to initiate action it was usually smothered.

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Bundrage suffered a nasty cut next to his left eye from inside action during the fourth frame, and lost a point from referee Steve Smoger for holding infractions in round eight.

Considering the fight was well on the line, round nine was surprisingly uninspired. At times you could have kept punch stats with a sundial.

The fighters finally looked like they really wanted a victory as they went at it to start round ten. Bundrage landed enough straight left leads to make a difference.

Scoring: Julie Lederman 96-93, Don Ackerman 96-93, Eddie Scunzio 95-94.

Headliner Ouma, now 25-5-1, showed he could still survive heavy leather, but after three straight losses he now has to prove his brief reign as a top tier performer has any legs left at all.

When it came down to slugging survival supremacy in the main event, it was Bundrage, 28-3 (16), who kept on chugging and put himself in contention for another high profile, televised pay increase.

Not exactly a dream, but not bad for a Friday night's work.

In the televised appetizer, spoiler Germaine Sanders ended the knockout streak of welterweight Philly prospect Mike Jones, now 13-0 (12), but couldn't stop Jones from taking another step in his tutorial stages. 38 year old birthday boy Sanders, 27-6 (17), showed up to win but dropped a unanimous 8 round nod. It was a solid effort for Jones but he showed he's not yet a real contender. Sanders showed well poised survival durability.