LINCOLN, R.I. – Normally, a fighter waits until after a fight to retire. Friday night former world title contender Lance Whitaker retired before his bout with Jason Estrada.

There is little other explanation for the somnambulant manner in which the 35-year-old Whitaker sleep-walked his way through the first nine rounds of what proved to be a lop-sided points victory for Estrada on ESPN2's Friday Night Fights. Though clearly in shape, Whitaker fought like a man on his last legs. Or at least one who had taken a vow of nonviolence.

Whatever he was doing, he wasn't fighting very often, which made the task of looking good a difficult one for Estrada. He did what he could, throwing flurries of punches all night while controlling the action and the distance precisely as he had hoped. Whitaker was in such a defensive posture there was little chance of doing much damage, especially against a man with an 82-inch reach and the intention of using every inch of it to not get hit.

In the end, Estrada won by wide margins on all cards, 98-92 on two and 97-93 on the third in large part because Estrada (12-1, 2 KO) was able to do as he'd promised, staying mostly inside on the chest of Whitaker, where Estrada's far superior hand speed allowed him to consistently beat Whitaker to the punch while effectively smothering the 6-8 Whitaker's offense by giving him little room to punch effectively.

Whitaker (32-5-1, 27 KO) made little use of that advantage, seldom jabbing but rather looking more like the Heisman Trophy – sticking his left arm out to ward Estrada off rather than attack him. In contrast, Estrada was consistently the aggressor, landing a stinging right uppercut repeatedly when they were in close as well as looping hooks that often caught the much taller man as he backed away.

"His size was no big deal,'' Estrada said. "My hands were just too fast. I thought he was going to go a couple of times but he hung in there. He's a tough guy. The key was I fought my fight.''

That and the fact that Whitaker didn't fight at all, which was hardly Estrada's fault. Growing ever more frustrated at Whitaker's unwillingness to engage, Estrada began to talk to his former world-rated opponent late in the fight, perhaps hoping to taunt him into taking the kind of risk that might open him up for a counter attack. But the lanky Californian, who was one fight into a comeback after a 26-month layoff following knockout losses in 2005 to Luan Krasniqi and future heavyweight WBO heavyweight champion Sultan Ibragimov, would have no part of it.

With the way he fought Friday night it appeared he also wanted no part of continuing his comeback much further. Rather, he looked like he was well on his way back to retirement and in many rounds it appeared he already had.

In the end, it was not a stirring performance but one could hardly blame Estrada for that. He did what he could to make it a fight against an opponent who clearly was disinterested in such a

proposition.

In the semi-main event, undefeated cruisersweight prospect Aaron Williams (17-0-1, 12 KO) made short work of Andre Purlette, dropping him with an explosive double right hand late in the second round and then finishing him with a flurry of punches when Purlette rose on unsteady legs.

Purlette (40-3, 35 KO) was supposed to have been a step up in class but he was down on his back before anyone had time to find out when Williams set him up perfectly for a punch he said he learned from his idol, Floyd Mayweather, Jr.

“I doubled up the right like Floyd,’’ Williams said. “I did just what he does. Every body thinks I’m just a boxer but I can punch when I sit down on my punches.’’

He had worked on that for weeks in Las Vegas with his trainer, former light heavyweight champion Eddie Mustafa Muhammad, who has been working hard to convince him that he can do more than simply outbox his opponents. He can also outbomb them.

“Aaron is a boxer-puncher,’’ Muhammad said. “When Purlette got up he hit him with a six punch combination and the fight was over. Aaron is still a baby. He’s only 21. We’re not trying to rush him. We want to keep him moving at a moderate pace. This was a step up and he handled it well. Now we move on to the next phase.’’

On the undercard, super middleweight Andrey Nevsky (5-0, 3 KO) won a four round decision from Fitzgerald Johnson (1-4, 1 KO); undefeated flyweight Isander Beauchamp (5-0, 2 KO) stopped Rob Bell in his pro debut at 2:14 of the second round; Providence light heavyweight Joey Spina (22-1-1, 15 KO) slugged his way to a hard fought and frequently ferocious if inelegant six-round split decision decision from Quebec’s David Whittom (10-6-1, 6 KO); and Lowell, MA. light heavyweight Joe McCreedy (8-1, 5 KO) dropped a decision to Henry Mayes (6-6-1) in a six rounder.