Written by David A. Avila
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Tim “Desert Storm” Bradley captured the WBC junior welterweight title from Great Britain’s much-feared Junior Witter by split decision on Saturday.

“I told everybody I worked hard to win this fight,” Bradley (22-0, 11 KOs) told theSweetScience.com by telephone immediately after the fight.

Palm Springs fighter Bradley’s peculiar combination of speed, patience and an overhand right convinced two of three judges including the crowd that he was deserving of the junior welterweight title over Witter (36-2-2, 21 KOs) at FM Trent Arena in Nottingham, England.

After five rounds of punch and hold tactics that seldom saw more than one punch land by either fighter, Bradley distanced himself from Witter by landing an overhand right on the jaw that floored him with 20 seconds left in the sixth round.

“He was pulling back when I caught him with an overhand right,” Bradley, 24, said. “We had been working on that a lot during training. We noticed he pulled back like that.”

From the sixth round on Bradley stepped up the pressure and found openings for his right hands and later the left hook. Witter seemed satisfied with firing a single punch and holding until the 10th round. By then, it was too late.

Bradley felt his trainer and father’s game plan was perfect.

“They wanted me to work the body until the sixth round,” said Bradley. “I stuck to the plan and kept going to the body early.”

It was evident early that Bradley’s speed was not something Witter was accustomed to facing since 2000 when he faced and lost to then undefeated Zab Judah. Once again speed proved to be the difference.

“My jab to the belly was the key,” said Bradley. “We wanted to take a little of his energy away early in the fight.”

The Palm Springs fighter was a decided 5-1 underdog because of several reasons including never having faced a top 10 contender, never fighting outside of California and never fighting for a world title.

It didn’t matter.

“It was beautiful,” said Alex Camponovo, who most of Bradley’s matches in California. “Tim fought a great fight.”

Earlier this month, Bradley was supposed to fight former lightweight world champion Jose Luis Castillo, but the Mexican fighter failed to make weight and the elimination bout was canceled. The WBC named Bradley the number one contender. And when Witter could not convince WBA titleholder Ricky Hatton to fight, Bradley sent over a challenge from California.

Witter took the bait.

“I studied the videos and saw that he gets tired late in the fight,” said Bradley. “That’s why we decided to increased the pressure.”

During the last three rounds Bradley seemed to have Witter’s rhythm down and crashed lefts and rights on the awkward fighter. Witter never seemed to be able to slow down the California fighter’s pace. The judges scored it 115-112 Witter and 115-113, 114-113 for Bradley.

“We had a perfect plan,” Bradley said.

Ken Thompson, president of Thompson Boxing Promotions that have provided Bradley’s fights from the beginning, said it was something he’ll always remember.

“Boxing got a reward today,” said Thompson. “There’s no nicer person that deserves to win the title than Tim Bradley.”