

WNF Recap: Mostly Sad Night For The Seniors

Written by Michael Woods
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I didn't know someone had finally done it, started a boxing Senior Tour. But there it was, debuting on ESPN's Wednesday Night Fights, no less. 1990s standouts Stevie Johnston, Freddie Norwood and Arthur Williams, road weary vets all, gloved up for our viewing pleasure on a card that took place at Camp Lejeune in Jacksonville, North Carolina.

Let me quickly make clear that my tongue is glued to my cheek now, lest anyone think I'm serious, or worse, somebody thinks the boxing Senior Tour is a sellable concept, and wants to give it a go. Not a good idea; it's one of the worst aspects to the savage science, seeing guys who need a buck, or to keep hearing the cheers, hanging on too long. But this being a free country, if a man can pass his medical, he's allowed to keep at it, keep trying to turn back the clock, make his body do what it used to be able to do on command, keep toiling to make too little in exchange for too much. End lecture.

"L'il But Bad" Johnston (age 35, 134 pounds) came in with a 42-5-1 mark, while Edner Cherry (age 25, weighing 134 1/2) came in with a 23-5-2 record in the night's headline tussle. The night ended poorly for Johnston, as it did Norwood, while the oldest vet, Williams, did manage to eke out a win. One wonders, will the Tour continue for all three of the vets? I hope not. Maybe some of you out there with more power and means than I can revitalize the sadly slumbering plans for fighters' unions and pensions, so more boxers can do fewer Senior Tour appearances. End lecture two.

The lefty Johnston had belts at 135 on two occasions, but it's been many a moon since he's won a fight against a marquee foe. He absorbed an ugly loss to Vivian Harris in 2006, and we thought maybe he'd call it a day then. No such dice. He succumbed to Cherry, a faster, stronger, younger combatant, in the 10th round, after hitting the floor in the third and ninth rounds.

In the third, Cherry sent Johnston to the mat with a right. He got up, and fought on. He was landing shots in the seventh round, still moving his head effectively. No, one didn't think that the power-deficient Johnston could turn the tide, but he proved that he could show up in shape, and focused. Cherry moved a whole bunch, but wasn't turning up the heat on the elder like he should've and could've. And it was surprising to see him eating straight left leads. But he went to work in the ninth, putting Johnston down with about five clean shots with 36 seconds to go. Up at four, Johnston survived, until the tenth. Then, another right forced him down for good, at the 2:34 mark, where he stayed for a few minutes. He did rise, on his own, happily.

Freddie "L'il Hagler" Norwood, age 38, stepped in with Donnie Edwards to try and avenge a DQ loss (low blows) that took place on Sept 16, 2007. No luck for the wrongly-nicknamed hitter. Edwards KO'd Norwood in the seventh round, to up his record to 13-2-1. Norwood, who may be well served to call it a career, slipped to 42-3-1. His only other loss was to Smoke Gainer.

In the final frame, the stance-shifting Edwards knocked the lefty Norwood to the mat with a left

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high on the head. It sent Norwood to the ground, face first, where he struggled to get up. He could not beat the count. It was an ugly fight, full of holding and the odd low blow, but Edwards deserves some props for taking out the former world champ.

Edwards, age 28, put Norwood on the floor with a left in the third, but the vet managed to finish the round. A cut opened over his right eye before the knockdown, which was placed on the top of the head and looked almost glancing on replay. The left eye was sliced open later. The two time featherweight titlist Norwood, long removed from his glory days at 126, had his moments to this point. His feet were still able to get him away from trouble, at points, but as the fight progressed, the vet, who turned pro in 1989, lost steam.

Norwood's had quite a journey; he was convicted of assault and served 3 1/2 years in jail, and was released in 2006. The boxer had received a call from his mom, who'd been in a car accident. Norwood went to her, and got into a fight with the other driver. He beat the man into a coma, and claimed he blacked out during the event, but a jury found him guilty. He professed his innocence, even after his release.

Another former world champion, 43-year-old Arthur Williams (44-15-1) met 33-year-old Clarence Moore (5-4-1) in a cruiserweight scrap. Williams looked like he'd leave with a KO victory, when he went hardcore in the second, but Moore held on. Instead, Williams, who had a 116-98 edge in punches landed, and a 605-316 edge in punches thrown, took a UD6 (60-52 x 3).

Williams sent him down with a right cross in the second, and then went on a spree trying to finish Moore off. He sent him into the ropes, and the ref administered a mandatory eight. The bell saved Moore.

Bert Sugar showed viewers Dick Tiger/Bob Foster footage. They met on May 24, 1968. Foster had to pony up \$100,000 to the Tiger crew, according to footage, to get the light heavyweight title shot. It paid off; Foster blasted Tiger with a left hook, and the champ was unable to left himself up in time. NOTE: Solid move by ESPN getting Sugar to do this turn-back-the-clock segment. Now, if the ESPN powers that be could secure more footage, more fight libraries, so they don't have to throw up so many sub-classic fights on Classic, then we'd really be in business.