

FNF Recap: Aaron Williams Is Upset

Written by Ron Borges
Thursday, 22 May 2008 19:00

LINCOLN, R. I. – With Jose Luis Herrera it's always feast or famine. Friday night he served up a banquet at the expense of hot cruiserweight prospect Aaron Williams.

Herrera came into ESPN2's Friday Night Fights at the Twin Rivers Casino with 15 victories, all by knockout, and four defeats, all by knockout. Consistency thy name is Jose Luis Herrera and after one round it appeared he would add to the latter half of that record after Williams dropped him with two solid right hands that wobbled him and a left hook that sent him to the floor.

The nine-time U.S. national amateur champion continued to batter Herrera for the rest of the round and did the same in rounds 3 and 4 after taking the second round off to catch his breath, but he never again was able to put Herrera where he most wanted him – which was back on the floor.

But as each round passed Williams seemed to get ever more confident and as he did his hands began to drop ever lower until he found himself unexpectedly in the wrong place at the wrong time and he got nailed by a short right hand to the chin and his face went blank.

Out on his feet, Williams tried to cover up and hold on until the sound of wind chimes began to fade inside his head but Herrera (16-4, 16 KO) refused to give him any breathing space. With referee Charlie Dwyer eyeing Williams closely, Herrera hit him with a barrage and Williams staggered backwards into the ropes. Dwyer ruled that was all that was preventing him from falling blindly into the first row of seats so he called it a knockdown and began a long standing eight count. Had it been a standing 80 count Williams' head might have cleared the cobwebs put there by Herrera but eight was not enough.

As Herrera walked toward him after Dwyer released him from protective custody, Williams tried to back away on legs that were unfit to hold him upright for long. He staggered backwards and across the ring before Herrera could land another punch, falling to one knee without being hit. This was wise from a self-preservation stand point but when he got up, waiting for him on the ring apron was Dr. Robert McKindrick, a penlight in his hand and mercy on his mind.

The ringside physician shined the light in Williams' eyes but they did not respond. So after what seemed an unusually long period of examination the doctor finally turned to Dwyer and it was obvious what had to be done. Somebody had to keep Jose Luis Herrera away from the now defenseless Williams (17-1-1, 12 KO) and the fight was stopped at 1:58 of Round 5.

"I really showed who I am tonight," Herrera said. "He had me out on my feet. I was really, really hurt. I got to be honest. But because of my conditioning I was able to use my legs and get out of it. I knew if I survived little by little the fight would come to me."

That it did, although after the ringside physician took so long to make a decision Herrera was wondering how long it would take to happen.

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"I never seen that before," Herrera said of the long medical examination at ringside before the fight was stopped. "I was a little shaken by it but I knew the kid was really hurt and there was enough time in the round to finish him. He was so out on his feet I was glad he stopped it. He's a young kid and a great fighter. It was the best thing they could do."

Williams' trainer, former light heavyweight champion Eddie Mustafa Muhammad, agreed and not without some knowledge of what Williams had just experienced. When Muhammad was ranked No. 1 in the world he went into Rahway State Prison in New Jersey and was upset by an inmate named James Scott on CBS, blowing a title shot. It took him several more fights to finally win the world title, a circumstance he reminded Williams of in the locker room after the match.

"Now we'll find out what he's made of," Muhammad said of his fighter. "These things happen. I know because it happened to me. It's not the end of the world. He got a little too confident and let his hands down and got caught.

"It could be a blessing in disguise. I don't have any trouble with the stoppage. Aaron didn't look steady on his feet so the doctor protected the fighter. Now he knows not to go in with his hands down against a puncher."

That, at least, he does.

'I got a little careless and he caught me,' Williams said. "I got no excuses. He was a lot stronger than I thought he was."

In the semi-main event, so was 2004 U.S. Olympian Jason Estrada, who did what his critics have been demanding when he stopped late replacement Moultrie Witherspoon at 1:38 of the seventh round of their scheduled 10-round heavyweight matchup.

After six and a half one sided rounds in which Estrada rocked Witherspoon (14-2, 8 KO) several times with big uppercuts, referee Joey Lupino stepped in and stopped the fight after Estrada knocked Witherspoon's mouthpiece half way to Providence.

Although Witherspoon did not appear significantly hurt, he also did not appear to be significantly competitive against Estrada, who upped his record to 13-1 with only the third stoppage of his career.

Flush with victory, Estrada claimed he is now ready to step up against any of the young prospects in the division.

"It was a good win," Estrada said. "The dude was a little smarter than I thought. Once I caught him early he got on his bike. He took some really good shots. I thought I had him out earlier in the fight but he came to survive. My punches early surprised him. He must have heard that I couldn't punch. In between rounds, my father (and trainer Roland Estrada) said 'Don't you want to make money? You need to knock people out! That's what they want.' So I tried to give it to him.

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“Now I’ve been trying to get a fight against Chazz Witherspoon, Chris Arreola, guys like that. Eventually they’re going to have to fight me.”

Maybe, but not off a win against the wrong Witherspoon on a night when he was originally set to fight the wrong Philadelphia heavyweight, journeyman Derek Bryant.

On the undercard, a small but far too familiar Rhode Island travesty of justice occurred when undefeated junior welterweight Steve Almaraz saw his undefeated record blemished despite twice dropping Hank Lundy, when he somehow still managed to lose a unanimous decision in a four-round fight.

Admittedly, Lundy also dropped Almaraz once in the same round in which he sent Lundy to the canvas but how the judges came up with scores of 38-37 on two cards and 38-36 on the third was difficult enough to fathom that a loud percentage of the fans at ringside hooted at Lundy as if he had something to do with the bad arithmetic he’d just benefited from.

That scoring trend continued when Henry Mayes (7-6-1, 4 KO) lost a rematch to Joe McCreedy (8-2, 5 KO) by split decision. The judges’ opinions were split enough that one judge had McCreedy winning every round while another had Mayes, who decisioned McCreedy last month, winning.