

It's rare that two fighters have two encounters, and very little ends up being resolved, but that is precisely the case with Ricardo Torres and Kendall Holt. Both of their meetings so far have been wrapped in controversy, and still leave question marks as to who is the better man.

Their now infamous first match took place in Torres' native Colombia. A wild, rubbish-hurling crowd underscored the uncontrolled atmosphere as Torres scored a controversial come-from-behind kayo of Holt. Afterward, the American challenger complained of grossly unfair treatment.

Following a rigorous appeal to the WBO, Holt was granted Saturday's rematch, which crammed its own share of controversy into sixty-one seconds of action. In a little over a minute, fans saw three knockdowns, a foul, a clash of heads, questionable officiating, and another besmudged victory, this time in Holt's favor.

In the wake of what surely will go down as the round of the year, there are some issues that need to be addressed in the increasingly dramatic Holt-Torres soap opera. Hopefully, this will lay to rest some of the heated dialogue already circulating on the internet regarding Holt's victory and what it all means.

The Foul

The first point of contention raised ultimately proved inconsequential after Holt's KO, but it is nevertheless worthy of discussion. Following the first knockdown from a Torres right hand, the Colombian champion swarmed Holt in an effort to immediately end the fight. After pounding Holt to the mat for a second time with his follow-up assault, Torres landed one more left hook before referee Jay Nady separated the two just as Holt regained his feet, obviously committing a foul. Nady did not acknowledge the foul by Torres, instead conducting the mandatory eight-count as if no infringement had occurred.

The culpability in this situation falls in two directions. The primary fault rests with Torres. Though the extra punch wasn't a devastating blow, it was nevertheless a punch that Holt was not expecting after having gone down. With the action as fast and furious as it was leading up to the second knockdown, it's somewhat understandable how Torres could've gotten carried away, especially since Nady had not yet gotten between the two fighters. However, what it comes down to is this: Torres is a professional fighter, and should have possessed the discipline to apply the brakes in such a situation.

While the foul itself was entirely Torres' fault, the way it was handled by Jay Nady was completely inappropriate. Given the already explosive history between the two fighters, Nady needed to send the message early that nonsense would not be tolerated. He didn't send that message when he ignored Torres' flagrant foul. Had the fight continued beyond the first round, it would be easy to envision the fight quickly getting out of Nady's control.

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Ironically, this wasn't the first time Nady was involved in a controversial ruling regarding a late-punch foul. He was also the third man in the ring for Barrera-Marquez. In almost a replica of what took place Saturday night, Nady made the exact opposite ruling. After Barrera knocked Marquez down and followed up with a late shot (which, frankly, was worse than the one Torres landed), Nady did not count the knockdown, instead taking a one point from Barrera for the foul.

What accounts for the inconsistency between how he handled Saturday night's foul? It wouldn't be unreasonable to believe that Joe Cortez' much-criticized handling of the previous weekend's fight between Humberto Soto and Francisco Lorenzo made Nady reluctant to act rashly in addressing the late hit by Torres. Perhaps the desire to escape criticism led to Nady's inaction.

What would the ideal scenario have been? Counting the knockdown was fine, but Nady should have checked on Holt's condition and strongly chastised Torres for the infraction. Sending a fighter back into action in any way compromised due to a foul is completely irresponsible on the part of an official.

Again, it was all rendered academic with the Holt KO, but faulty officiating needs to be addressed whenever it occurs. Fighter safety takes precedence over anything else.

The Head-butt

And now onto a more consequential occurrence: the head-butt which preceded the knockout.

Prior to the concussive right hand by Holt which ended matters abruptly, a violent clash of heads occurred, of which Torres received the worse end. The belief of many is that the head-butt buzzed Torres, thus making him a sitting duck for the Holt right hand that ended the fight.

The question is, does Torres have a legitimate right to cry foul? Well...Not really.

The head-butt itself appeared to be unintentional. At the moment of impact, both fighters were advancing, Holt with his head down and Torres with his head up. It could be said that Holt led with his head on his way in, but he was clearly fighting his way off the ropes, which requires forward momentum on his part. Simply put, Holt didn't do anything outside of the rules.

Was it an unfortunate incident? Certainly. Was it something for which Holt should be held responsible? Absolutely not.

A parallel from recent boxing history occurred in 2002, in the first meeting between Shane Mosley and Vernon Forrest. In the second round, a clash of heads opened a cut high on the forehead of Mosley. Of greater consequence than the cut was the fact that Mosley was shaken by the head-butt. Even after a break to acknowledge the cut, Mosley still looked visibly bothered. Moments later, Forrest landed a whistling right hand that rocked Mosley. The round saw Mosley hit the canvas twice, all of which, it could be argued, was a result of the initial head-butt.

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Even though the head clash may have started things, Forrest still generally receives the credit for dropping Mosley. When historians look back at the fight, the head-butt will be an after-thought.

Well, what then about Saturday night's occurrence?

Hopefully, as was the case for Forrest, Holt will not be penalized for an accidental occurrence. While the head-butt was certainly a significant event, there was little that could have been done. There was no break in the action for Jay Nady to call attention to it, as the knockout blow was landed seconds later.

It's a really tough break for Torres, but unfortunately, it's a part of the game.

The KO

After the controversial head-butt occurred, Holt immediately pounced on Torres, landing the most decisive blow of the fight, a right hand that rendered the defending champ unconscious upon contact.

The bitter debate is how Holt's knockout should be looked upon in light of the head-butt that landed immediately prior. Is Holt's victory of the questionable variety?

From this vantage point, no. Holt's victory is entirely legitimate.

The reality is that, head-butt or no, it was Holt's right hand that determined the outcome of the fight. Even in the absence of a head clash, the punch landed by Holt would have been a fight-ender. Maybe the head-butt allowed the shot to land at that particular moment, but let us not forget the facts:

- * Torres was overly aggressive in pursuing Holt, who wasn't in the dire straits Torres believed him to be.

- * Torres' reckless approach was, in part, responsible for the impact of the butt.

- * Holt, one of the most underrated punchers in the game, landed a shot that didn't just hurt Torres, but separated him from reality.

There is really nothing questionable in the facts, so there shouldn't be questionable in the knockout. The head-butt was a chance occurrence, so it seems unfair to take away from Holt's victory.

It was a clean KO with an unfortunate precursor, but a legitimate victory nonetheless.

The Aftermath

Let's take a moment to make a distinction here. Holt's victory is legitimate, but far from

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decisive. Of the sixty-one seconds, let's remember that Torres dominated, roughly, the first fifty-eight.

This really, in microcosm, accurately depicts the Holt-Torres saga. After two fights ending in two stoppages, not a whole lot has been solved. In both fights, the guy who controlled the majority of each bout ended up with the loss on his record. It is impossible to determine who is superior in the wake of these two fights.

There's only one way to settle matters.

Rubber match, anyone?