Written by Michael Woods
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He has a ways to go before he can be compared to his skilled father, but Buddy McGirt Jr. certainly showed on Friday Night Fights that he's got a similar sort of heart that his pop had as a fighter, as he beat cagy vet Raymond Joval in his first fight back from a disappointing KO loss in April.

McGirt (160 1/2) fought in the main event at City Center in Saratoga Springs, NY, and hats must be tipped to his management team, for choosing a low-power first foe back, in Joval (162 1/2).

The 25-year-old McGirt (18-1 entering) used his reach and height to good effect for the first half of the bout, and faded some down the stretch, while the 39-year-old Netherlands native Joval (37-4), who wears a blond halo of hair, did well to shrug off two knockdowns in the third, and make McGirt dig down.

The judges saw it 97-91, 99-89, 99-89. It was closer than that, in my opinion.

In round one, the lefty McGirt didn't seem too gun-shy coming off his KO loss. Smart matchmaking move, I reiterate, as Joval came in with just 16 KOs. McGirt rammed home the jab repeatedly, he mixed in hooks to good effect. In the second round, Joval did not get untracked. McGirt pecked away from outside, using his reach edge to take the round. In the third, McGirt had his man hurt. He dropped him with a right hook at 1:42. Joval got up, and didn't have the pop to keep McGirt off him. A snappy left put Joval down again at :58 seconds. He was up quickly, and managed to exit the round. Could McGirt finish the gig?

In the fourth, McGirt again pressed forward. Joval got inside to blunt McGirt's reach advantage. He knew he needed to switch up the plan or his goose would be cooked. In the fifth round, Joval hung around, probably because he was slipping shots better. McGirt's hands had slowed down some. On to the sixth. McGirt started measuring his man better, but Joval's energy level was still at a high level. He landed some left hooks, nothing deadly, but they scored. By the end of the round, he had McGirt backing up, improbably. He may have stolen the sixth. In the seventh round, blood leaked from McGirt's nose. Was McGirt bummed that he didn't close the show earlier, or what? He still let Joval get in his face, and didn't use those long legs as effectively as he could've to let those long arms get to work. Joval drew another warning for going low.

In the eighth round, both men's arms were weary. Teddy Atlas had it 68-64 to this point. This was new territory for McGirt, by the way. The vet just put his hands on McGirt with pesky, scoring pops. In round nine, Joval banged McGirt with a left hook to kick things off. Buddy, James' pop, told Atlas and Joe Tess that his kid needed to use his jab to get the win. "I think he's doing good against a veteran like Joval," he said. He admitted his nerves were rubbed raw as he watched his kid. In the 10th round, both men went to the body, and showed urgency, as it should be in the final frame. Joval landed some sneaky-quick rights, as McGirt's handspeed dropped to 50-75% of what it was at the open. The judges then spoke.

McGirt landed more (266-230) and threw more (917-714). Atlas scored it for McGirt, 96-93.

Two time NY Golden Glove champ Nagy "The Dominican Dynamite" Aguilera (8-0 entering) took on vet Gary Wilcox (21-3-1 coming in) in the show opener. Atlas saw it 29-29 through three rounds. Nagy is composed in the ring, and didn't get overeager in this step-up fight. Wilcox is a crafty one, way over his ideal weight, so Nagy needed to be careful that he wouldn't get picked off by the energy-conserving veteran. For me, Nagy waited too much, he looked too patient, like a vet of 30 fights. Instead, I'd like to see the fire and fury of a hungry 22-year-old. Wilcox had the edge, 120-119, in punches landed, but Nagy threw more, 326-262. Atlas saw it 78-75 for Nagy, and the judges called it 80-72, 78-74, 78-74, Aguilera.

SPEEDBAG Atlas called out judge Jerry Cantu, who scored 97-93 for Jeff Lacy over Epifanio Mendoza on Wednesday Night Fights. He asked the California Commission to make Cantu to explain his 10-9 round for Lacy in the second round, in which Lacy was in trouble. I second that call, if only to erase the natural inferences that could be made, that the man is on the take, or inept. Being inclined to believe a man innocent til proven guilty, I won't go there, but Cantu's card absolutely reeked.

---Sean Landeta, an NFL punter, was in studio with Brian Kenny. Not exactly certain why a boxer wasn't in there, there are plenty of them around, and hell, a certain TSS editor would've dragged his suit outta the closet and chatted with BK!

---Atlas said he likes Cotto against Margarito. He didn't like Margarito's effort against Paul Williams, and thinks Cotto will find a way to win. I think Cotto will win this one handily, by the way. Cotto has improved a chunk in every fight he's been in in the last few years, and going up seven pounds has helped him as much as anything.