

## Sunglasses Can't Hide What Happened

Written by Ron Borges

Sunday, 03 August 2008 19:00

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Zab Judah has always thought of himself as a miniature Mike Tyson. Saturday night he proved he was once again.

Judah and Tyson sprang from the same Brooklyn neighborhood, have had some of the same sad sacks hanging around them collecting checks and when sufficiently pressured react in the same way. They wilt.

This was evident when Judah began to feel the hot breath of a hard-headed, single-minded opponent on him at the Palms Casino in Las Vegas. The more Joshua Clotney made clear that he had come to the Pearl Theatre to win, the more Judah began to recede until he finally did the same thing Tyson did against Evander Holyfield. He looked for a way out.

Judah found it after Clotney split his right eyelid from end to end with a sharp right uppercut midway through a ninth round Clotney was winning in a big way. That punch arrived at a time when their welterweight title fight's outcome was becoming clear. Clotney had taken control of Judah both physically and mentally. The outcome had been decided. One man had broken. All that was left was the inevitable beat down to come and this Zab Judah could not face.

So, as Tyson had done the night he bit Holyfield like a frightened dog when he realized he was going to lose to him a second time, Judah found a way out. He stepped back from Clotney and wiped his eye, conning referee Robert Byrd into believing there had been a head butt when none occurred. Replays made clear what had slit Judah's eyelid open – Clotney's gloved right fist and a beating that had begun to escalate progressively from the sixth round on. Judah won several early rounds and rallied again in Round 6 but that was his last hurrah, a moment in which he fought well but was unable to either hurt Clotney or dissuade him from continuing to assault him relentlessly.

Just over two rounds later, with his nose dripping blood and his eye cut, Judah claimed a foul that never happened and Byrd fell for the con. Ringside physician Dr. James Game did not.

After Byrd called him in to examine the cut, Game wiped Judah's eye clear of blood and was ready to allow him to go back to work only to hear him insist he couldn't see. Three times Dr. Game held several fingers in front of Judah's face. Each time he claimed blindness despite the fact there was little swelling around the eye and no blood in it.

Given no choice after Judah insisted he could not see, Game told Byrd to stop the fight. This meant they would go to the scorecards with no more violence or bloodshed necessary. Clotney was angry about it. Judah seemed relieved.

This was the same gambit Hasim Rahman, historically no pillar of resolve himself when feeling pressured, pulled on James Toney two weeks ago after suffering an even less damaging cut. Rahman got away with it because he had actually at least been butted and the fight had not

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gone four rounds so the bout was ruled no contest. Although Judah must have known this time they would go to the scorecards he was willing to bet on three judges' opinions rather than on his own skills. Not surprisingly the way the fight had been going, he lost the bet but got what he wanted. He got to cry foul and make excuses.

Judah failed in the most basic of ways. He failed to react like a fighter, who by definition and job description would not have taken the road Judah chose unless he's a fighter who learned under Tyson, a street corner bully who was knocked out by every single fighter who stood up to him. That included not only Holyfield, Buster Douglas and Lennox Lewis but also a journeyman named Danny Williams and the inept but willing Kevin McBride.

Judah has the same qualities. He has lost every time he faced top quality opposition and usually in similar ways. One can excuse his second round knockout loss to Kostya Tszyu by saying he was young and foolish but he was broken by a nifty boxer like Cory Spinks, forced to give up and stop trying to win against a tough journeyman named Carlos Baldomir, tried to foul his way out of his loss to Floyd Mayweather, jr. by hitting him low and behind the head before engaging in a near riot with Mayweather's cornermen rather than fighting the person he was being paid to fight.

He was utterly broken down mentally and physically by Miguel Cotto, who beat him so severely Judah fell to the floor claiming he'd been hit low at least three times. As with Clottey, when it got hot Zab Judah looked for a way out.

This latest performance was the worst however because it was so obvious what he was doing. He was not butted by Clottey but Judah had made a point of talking about that possibility all week long, thus setting up his alibi in case he needed it.

As both he and Tyson had done in the past, he fought with fire for a while, until it became evident that not only was Clottey not going to submit, he was not going to stop punching him in the face. Clottey said he had come not just to win a title but "to beat Zab Judah" who he professed to have no love for and his animus was clear from the outset.

By early in Round 9 Clottey was extracting a heavy toll from Judah for whatever slights had passed between them back in the days when both trained at Gleason's Gym in Brooklyn. Judah had been bleeding from the nose since early in the fight and eating a steady stream of right hands for which he had no answer.

He had landed his best shots both to the head and body and Clottey had ignored them, boring back in on him round after round. As the rounds wore on, Judah was clinching more and punching less, especially from the seventh round on. Clottey won those rounds and was winning the ninth even more clearly when Judah suddenly reeled back from the uppercut and looked at Byrd in the way a schoolyard bully on the wrong end of beating begins to look for the assistant principal to intercede. When Dr. Game refused to help, Judah simply lied his way out of trouble.

Once safely back in his corner, with his boys around him yapping as sunglasses masked the

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damage Clotney had done to him, Zab Judah was his old self again. He loudly claimed he'd been wronged, insisting he'd been butted. Even after being shown video evidence to the contrary, Judah said, "Everyone here knows who won."

Yes they did. Joshua Clotney. What they should have also realized was that Zab Judah had taken a page from the MMA rulebook that night. He tapped out in a sport that has no provision for such a thing nor sees any honor in it.