

Godfrey Gets Off Floor, Saves Ranking

Written by Ron Borges

Thursday, 28 August 2008 19:00

Matt Godfrey knew what he could not afford Friday night. He could not afford to stay on the floor.

It had been five months since Godfrey tasted defeat for the first time, losing a less than close decision to undefeated Rudolf Kraj in Germany in a WBC cruiserweight elimination fight for the No. 1 ranking. Now here he was in his first time back in the ring, sitting on his backside, his head swimming for the third or fourth time but clear enough to understand that a second consecutive defeat would send his career tumbling backwards, as he just had.

The knockdown had come in an odd moment when both Godfrey and power-punching journeyman Emmanuel Nwodo both connected with right hands. Godfrey's landed flush but Nwodo's connected with more power and Godfrey tumbled to the floor, a place he'd visited in the first round as well from a right to the ear that the referee mistakenly ruled a push.

When Godfrey got up, he well understood he'd lost each of the first three rounds and was down four points. The answer to reversing this alarming trend was obvious to him. Put Emmanuel Nwodo down, which he did one round later, landing two big right hands that sent Nwodo to the floor, the bridge of his nose split wide open and blood spurting out of it when he arose.

Godfrey, sensing the moment of reversal of fortunes had come, bore in on Nwodo and caught him again with another crushing right hand that wobbled the big Nigerian and several less accurately thrown punches behind it. Two more rights landed as Nwodo retreated in a defensive posture, blood spurting from the bridge of his nose, running into his mouth and dripping off his chin to the canvas.

Referee Danny Schivaroni saw no need for this bloody carnage to continue and so jumped in at 1:57 of Round 4 and stopped the contest. It was a wise decision that allowed Godfrey to very likely move up in the WBC ratings next month while retaining the NABF cruiserweight crown he will have to make due with until his time comes against whoever emerges as the successor to David Haye (who recently moved up to heavyweight) as WBC champion.

More importantly, it allowed Godfrey to avoid the momentarily looming disaster of a second straight defeat.

"He started slowing down in the third round," Godfrey (17-1, 10 KO) said. "If you start slow, like I did, you gotta finish fast. I think I broke his nose with a jab."

He also broke the dreams of the powerful Nwodo, whose record fell to 22-5 with four of those losses coming by way of knockout. Nwodo is a powerful puncher who has stopped former cruiserweight champion Ezra Sellers and Imamu Mayfield and thought for a few minutes he was going to do something similarly surprising to young Godfrey, but his chin and an unwise strategy change became his undoing.

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The decision to give up his height and slip into a half crouch allowed Godfrey to attack him without having to be as concerned as he had been early in the fight that some right handed artillery was going to continue to come back at him as it had in the first three rounds.

“I knew my conditioning was good,” Godfrey said. “I kept pressuring him. Even though I got hit with a few good shots, I knew he’d slow down and die.”

Fortunately that didn’t happen, but Matt Godfrey’s dream of winning the WBC cruiserweight title nearly did when he woke up on the floor from what he would later describe as a flash knockdown. Surely it was because flashes of light and darkness took momentary presence inside his head before Godfrey’s mind began to clear and what he needed to do become obvious.

The more important point is that he did it. Matt Godfrey did what he had to do and in the balance he also pleased his fans because the master boxer of the cruiserweight division had done more than win. He’d won in the way fans tend to adore, tottering briefly on the edge of unconsciousness himself before pushing himself off the canvas and into the face of Emmanuel Nwodo, until Nwodo had surrendered.

Or at least his nose had.

Other results:

HEAVYWEIGHTS

Jason Estrada (14-1, 3 KOs), Providence, RI WDEC8 (79-73, 79-73, 79-73) Domonic Jenkins (13-9-1, 6 KOs), Dallas, TX

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Brian Macy (5-0, 2 KOs), Ledyard, CT WKO1 (1:49) Shawn Hawk (4-3, 2 KOs), Lexington, KY

Keith Kozlin (1-0, 0 KOs), Warwick, RI WDEC4 (40-36,40-36, 39-37) Borngod Washington (0-4), Queens, NY

FEMALE WELTERWEIGHTS

Addy Irizarry (6-2, 2 KOs), Hartford, CT WDEC4 (40-36, 40-36, 39-37) Yvonne Reis (7-13-1, 0 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Matt Remillard (15-0, 8 KOs), Manchester, CT WTKO4 (1:13) Aduino Gonzalez (10-6, 3 KOs), Austin, TX

(Remillard wins vacant WBC USNBC title)

FEMALE FEATHERWEIGHTS

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Christina Leadbeater (1-1, 0 KOs), Philadelphia, PA WDEC4 (39-37, 39-37, 38-39 Karen Dulin (0-2), Mystic, CT

Promoter: Classic Entertainment & Sports, Inc.

Matchmaker: Ted Panagiotis