

Carl Froch Rallies In Round Twelve, KOs Jermain Taylor

Written by George Kimball
Friday, 24 April 2009 19:00

MASHANTUCKET, Conn. --- By the time Carl Froch returned to his corner at the conclusion of the penultimate round, trainer Robert McCracken had hastily done his sums, and calculated that there was a good chance his man would need a knockout to retain his championship. And as it turned out he was right.

“You saw it,” said Froch. “I got it.”

Trailing by four points on each of two cards going into the final three minutes, Froch staged a furious last-ditch rally, scoring a knockdown by pummeling Jermain Taylor to the floor before battering his defenseless foe into submission. By the time referee Mike Ortega finally rescued Taylor, just 14 seconds remained in the fight.

Froch, a betting underdog even at the bookie shops in his native Nottingham, retained his WBC super-middleweight title with the dramatic, come-from-behind victory at Foxwoods' MGM Theatre, and will return from his successful invasion of America as he arrived – an undefeated champion, albeit one with one more significant notch on his gun, and with the respect he had arrived on these shores in search of.

He had never expected that it would come easily, and it didn't. Surprised by Taylor's counterpunching ability, he had dug himself into a big early hole against the former undisputed 160-pound king. Taylor got Froch's attention early in the first round when he sent him spinning with a right-hand lead, and gotten the judges' in the third, when he hurt him with a straight right, landed another, and then speared him with a laser-like left that caught the Englishman squarely on the chin and sent him sprawling.

Although Taylor appeared in complete command at this stage, it was hard to forget that he had similarly dominated Kelly Pavlik in the early going of their first fight.

After five rounds Froch trailed by six points on the scorecard of Mexican judge Omar Mintun, and by four on that of Mintun's Japanese counterpart, Nobuaki Uratani. (Canadian Jack Woodruff at this stage had it unaccountably even.)

“He caught me with two rights I didn't see coming,” said Froch of the knockdown. “I was all right. That's boxing. I just took the count and tried to get my composure back.”

It was an uphill battle over the second half of the fight, but Froch was able to increasingly exert himself. The jab Taylor had used to control the early going had slowed perceptibly, and the Englishman, whose awkward style is hardly pretty but nonetheless relentless, began to land with more frequency. Taylor's face remained almost serenely confident, but he knew he was in a fight.

Froch dominated the first two and a half minutes of the eighth before Taylor rallied in the

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stanza's closing seconds. His revival didn't seem sufficient to have pulled out the round, but both Mintun and Uratani gave it to him anyway in what might have been a major bone of contention had the issue gone to the scorecards.

In the ninth Froch stunned Taylor with a right, and as the battle moved into the championship rounds, the champion was the aggressor. Taylor, of course, has evinced stamina problems in the past, and Froch and his small band of supporters at ringside seemed to sense that the gap was inexorably narrowing.

Taylor looked to have all he could to just to get through the eleventh, but McCracken's calculations proved to be correct. Woodburn had Froch up 106-102 going into the final round, but the other two judges had Taylor leading by the same score.

Froch flung himself almost headlong at Taylor, who could offer scant resistance. Trapped in a neutral corner Taylor took a series of right hands to his unprotected head before crumpling to the floor, and for several seconds it didn't appear that he would be capable of beating Ortega's count.

In the end he struggled to his feet, and even made a brief but vain attempt to ward off Froch's frenzied attack, and by the time the end came Taylor's hands had fallen to his side and he was utterly unprotected while Froch clubbed away at his sagging form. Ortega might even have stopped it earlier, but his decision to rescue Taylor when he did was both just and merciful.

Some Taylor partisans, aware that had Jermain been allowed to survive the round the title might have been his even had he gone down again, might've wished the ref let it go, but Ortega said "my only concern is for the safety of the fighter. I don't consider the time. Whether it was 14 seconds or one second makes no difference. He was defenseless."

Froch, once he got a chance to review the Showtime tape of the telecast, seemed surprised that Taylor had remained erect as long as he did.

"He was badly hurt," said the champion. "He wasn't even looking at me."

The Sweet Science card, incidentally, had Taylor up 105-103 going into the final round. Since Froch had already erased that margin before the end came, he had done enough to retain his title in our view even in the absence of the TKO.

Following the abdication of Joe Calzaghe, Froch had won the vacant title in December by outpointing Haitian-born Jean Pascal, leaving many doubters about his credentials, even among his countrymen. But in scoring his 25th win (and his 20th knockout), against a bona fide elite fighter of Taylor's stature, he not only announced that he belongs, but potentially places himself in an enviable position for future big fights in the talent-laden 168-pound division.

Taylor's performance, gallant while it lasted, once again raises questions about his future. Taylor is now 28-3-1, but he is 3-3-1 since his back-to-back wins over Bernard Hopkins almost three and a half years ago, and hasn't stopped a single opponent since February of 2005.

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It was another disappointing evening for Taylor's promoter Lou DiBella, who had seen one of his charges come within a point of taking a title in St. Louis a night earlier and his marquee fighter come within 14 seconds on Saturday.

"But it was a great fight," conceded DiBella. "Froch isn't pretty. He's ungainly and nowhere near as talented as Jermain, but he's strong as an ox and he just keeps coming."

Both victor and vanquished were willing to entertain talk of a rematch, but don't expect that to happen anytime soon. On the other hand, having made a successful conquest of a new country, Froch will return to his own with newfound respect. The shadow cast by Joe Calzaghe will still be there, but it won't be quite as long.

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In the co-feature of the Showtime telecast, Oklahoma super-middleweight Allan Green demolished Carlos De Leon Jr., pounding the Puerto Rican to the canvas four times en route to a second-round TKO, setting up a likely challenge to IBF champion Lucien Bute at Montreal's Bell Centre on the July 10-11 weekend.

Green, who spent much of last year on the sidelines following an administrative suspension, was facing his first 'live' opponent in a couple of years – and this one didn't last long.

Early in the second he upended De Leon with a picture-perfect left hook, and when his foe arose, he clubbed him back to the canvas with two right hands. The third knockdown came seconds later, once again from a right, and although referee Joe Lupino allowed it to continue, Green pounded De Leon with two more overhand rights, bringing the referee's intervention at 1:54.

DeLeon complained that the last knockdown had come when he had been punched in the back of the head, which at that point hardly seemed material.

"He looked," said Green as he watched the replay, "like he got hit with the Hammer of Thor."

"I knew he couldn't hang in there with me," said Green, now 28-1. "He'd been down six times prior to this fight. My mission tonight was to make a statement."

Fighting for the first time since last November's lopsided loss to Ricky Hatton, former IBF 140-pound champion Paulie Malignaggi (26-2) won a unanimous decision over Chris Fernandez (16-7-1) of Salt Lake City in an off-TV eight-rounder. Malignaggi took the biggest shot of the night when Fernandez nearly put him down with a good left hand at the end of the sixth, but otherwise dominated. Don Trella, Glenn Feldman, and George Smith all scored it 79-73.

Arkansas veteran Dominick Guinn (31-6) shocked previously unbeaten Louisianan Johnnie White, knocking him down twice in the first round on the way to a TKO at 2:01 of the first. Guinn, who has now won three in a row after back-to-back losses to Eddie Chambers and

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Robert Hawkins, crushed White with a right hand to send him down the first time, and when the Louisianan got up on shaky legs, quickly put him down again, this time with a left. Although Eddie Claudio briefly allowed action to resume, he immediately halted it when Guinn connected with his next solid punch. White, who has fought primarily on the Louisiana Fairgrounds circuit, dropped to 21-1.

Framingham (Mass.) junior welter Danny O'Connor made it six for six in his nascent pro career with a unanimous decision over Missouri journeyman Travis Hartman (9-12-1). O'Connor floored Hartman twice, late in the second and again with 30 seconds left in the bout. Trella, Feldman, and Smith all returned 40-34 scorecards.

Jonathan Nelson (9-0), the nephew of Taylor trainer Ozell Nelson, won a unanimous decision over Eddie Caminero (5-1) of Lawrence, Mass. in a battle of previously unbeaten super middles. Although Nelson landed the heavier leather and rocked Caminero several times, both acquitted themselves well. Trella and Steve Weisfeld both scored it 58-56; Julie Lederman 59-66.

Brooklyn (NY) junior welter Sadam Ali (3-0) knocked down Schenectady's Bryan Abraham (1-1-1) in the third rounder of their 4-rounder on the way to a unanimous decision. 40-35 X 3 (Woodburn, Mintun, Uratani)

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MGM GRAND ARENA

FOXWOODS CASINO

MASHANTUCKET, Conn.

APRIL 25, 2009

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Carl Froch, 167, Nottingham, England TKO'd Jermain Taylor, 166, Little Rock, Ark. (12) (Retains WBC title)

Allan Green, 168, Tulsa, Okla. TKO'd Carlos De Leon Jr., 168, Trujillo Alto, Puerto Rico (2)

Jonathan Nelson, 163, Little Rock, Ark. dec. Eddie Caminero, 162, Lowell, Mass. (8)

HEAVYWEIGHTS: Dominick Guinn, 229, Hot Springs, Ark. TKO'd Johnnie White, 227, St. Martinsville, La. (1)

WELTERWEIGHTS: Paulie Malignaggi, 141, Brooklyn, NY dec. Chris Fernandez, 142, Salt Lake City, Utah (8)

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: Danny O'Connor, 140, Framingham, Ma. Dec. Travis Hartman, 140, St. Joseph, Mo. (4)

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Sadam Ali, 142. Brooklyn, NY dec. Bryan Abraham, 140, Schenectady, NY (4)