

Like Georgie Benton Used To Say...

Written by Ron Borges
Saturday, 30 May 2009 19:00

The venerable old Philadelphia trainer George Benton used to bark out advice to Pernell Whitaker with a voice that sounded like Barry White on steroids. Mid-fight his words always seemed to be a variation on the same theme: "Win this fight! Look good next fight."

Whitaker followed that philosophy, often in boring fashion, all the way to the International Boxing Hall of Fame. For several years he was considered among the best pound-for-pound fighters of his time. He could box and, when pushed, he could fight, but he tried to avoid the latter whenever possible, understanding that you are not paid extra for getting hit in the head unnecessarily.

In a convoluted way this brings us to WBC welterweight champion Andre Berto, who Saturday night easily defended his portion of the 147-pound title by outboxing and out-thinking junior welterweight title holder Juan Urango for 12 rounds.

Urango was never in the fight, a fact reflected in judges' scorecards that read 118-110 twice and 117-111 by a more generous observer of the action at the Hard Rock Arena in Hollywood, Fla. This was a marked departure from Berto's last title defense, when he was ill-prepared he now says for a night with crafty Luis Collazo.

Because of that, the fight degenerated into a battle royal down the stretch in which the champion had to rally mightily, which he did, to hold on to his title belt. Not surprisingly, Berto was heavily criticized after that fight in many corners for "struggling" against Collazo.

So what happens after he beats Urango easily? He's criticized for not making an exciting fight out of it.

Fortunately for Berto, he seems to be one fighter born without ears. Or at least with the ability to turn them on and off depending on whether what he's hearing is worth paying attention to or merely white noise. Criticism of his performance against Urango sounds like the latter in this corner.

Was it the most scintillating match in welterweight history? Far from it. Might he have been bolder at times? Perhaps so. But had the thing degenerated into a continuation of what went on in Round 4 and Berto found a way to win in a take-one-to-give one affair he would today be hearing criticism for ending up in a slugfest with a junior welterweight.

Such is the fate of a young boxer burdened with skills and high expectations. If he wins easy it was too easy or he should have done more. If he struggles he isn't what they thought he was.

Meanwhile, Berto is now 25-0 and laying down a pretty good foundation of wins over quality opponents from whom he can leave the ring with a bit more knowledge of his craft and a bit more confidence for the night he finally ends up in the ring against one of the top welterweights

Like Georgie Benton Used To Say...

Written by Ron Borges
Saturday, 30 May 2009 19:00

in the world.

What happens on that night will remain a mystery until he faces such a challenger from the iron that people like Miguel Cotto, Floyd Mayweather, Jr., Paul Williams, Shane Mosley and the presently on hiatus Antonio Margarito represent but Saturday night was an example of a guy who learned an important lesson from the Collazo fight and showed the extent of that knowledge.

Berto was prepared, had a plan and stuck to it. This resulted in an easy, one-sided victory based on an endless stream of jab-right hand, jab-right hands. A slugfest it was not but that was the point.

Berto's corner men did not want to see him succumb to either that or a loss of his mental edge, as he claims occurred early in Collazo fight. He did not. The result was he wins easily and immediately is asked why he didn't get rid of Urango.

If he had gotten rid of Urango, it would be said the challenger was an under sized opponent and stopping him proved nothing. If he struggled, as in the Collazo fight, he would be seen as less than what some people think he is. What's a guy to do?

In the end, just what Andre Berto did Saturday night and Pernell Whitaker did all the way to the Hall of Fame. Win this fight, look good next fight...and if you can make it easy do so because there will be hard nights coming soon enough. Why rush the process?