Written by Michael Woods
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A big, sloppy TSS kiss goes out to Versus, for buying the Adrian Diacanou/Jean Pascal main event from the Bell Centre in Montreal, Canada, and to the fighters for putting on a top tier scrap for fight fans. Pardon the saliva, but I was seriously amped as I took in some heavy-duty back and forth action, and pondered the meaning of Versus' entry into the Friday Night fight realm.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, the gauntlet has been thrown down, and it is up to ESPN how they want to respond, as Versus sent a message that they are a player in pugilism broadcasting with this show; we the fight fans can only benefit, as this club fighter of a network elevated themselves into the mix with the big boys on Friday night. Jean Pascal did the same, as he boxed expertly, scored a knockdown in the fifth, and wrested the WBC light heavyweight title from Diaconu by scores of 115-112, 116-112, and 116-111 (same score as TSS).

Diaconu (age 31; 173.9 pounds; 26-0, 15 KOs entering; from Montreal) figured he'd grind down the faster-fisted mover Pascal eventually. Pascal (ranked No. 5 by WBC; age 26; 174.9 pounds; 22-1, with 15 KOs entering; born in Haiti, lives in Quebec) had only a December 2008 loss to Carl Froch as a blemish on his resume.

Pascal worked in retreat to start off. He landed a hammering right to the body 2/3 of the way through that hurt me, on my couch. He tagged the champ with a clipping right soon after, and looked to be super confident. He moved smartly, his hands down when he was safely out of range. He slipped with aplomb, but one wondered if his legs could stay fresh for 12. The two engaged in grappling and rabbit punches on several occasions.

The movement by Pascal did diminish some by the fourth, but that wasn't necessarily to his advantage. The challenger clubbed Diac with a right behind the head, but the ref didn't flag it, because he'd dipped his head down prior to the punch's launch. Pascal dropped Diac in the fifth, with a left hook counter. He was up, with clear eyes, quickly. Pascal went in for the kill, but then backed off sensing the champ had his senses back. Indeed he did; he caught Pascal with a right, and wobbled him. Fab round.

In the sixth, Pascal's legs weren't like they were in the first. Could he step up the jab, keep the champ off him? He was still slipping effectively but could he keep that up? Maybe it wouldn't matter, he scored with two left hooks and a right to close out the round. In the seventh, Pascal's legs were back, and he was again making Diac miss badly. Both let off the gas some in round eight. Pascal maybe stole the round in the last five seconds. In the ninth, Diac threw more. In ten, Pascal danced. Would the judges look down on his displays of confidence, deeming them hubris? Pascal seemed sloppier, but did do some decent body work. Tight round. In the 11th, a jab made Pascal blink twice. Both men didn't fight clinches all that hard. A long right hit Pascal, but he got right back in the champ's face. Diac slammed Pascal, and nearly had him down in the last 20 seconds. In the 12th, the crowd stood the entire time. Pascal was busier, and we'd go to the cards.

Troy Ross (age 33; born in Guyana, resides in Toronto; 22-1, with 15 KOs) opened up the broadcast; he won the latest season of Contender, and is looking to parlay that into a title shot. Ross met up with Michael Simms (age 34; 20-11, 11 KOs), well known to TSS readers from the "Brute" series. Ross was the more aggressive of the two lefties. He often backed Simms up, clanged him with hooks to the head and body, while the Sac fighter held his guard high, and didn't often enough answer back. Ross' right eye puffed a bit in the fourth, but the enswell handled it. An accidental butt in the sixth opened a slice on Ross' left eye, but he didn't panic. He did get a bit more cautious, though, and Simms did move forward more. But our "Brute" man didn't press the issue like he really, really wanted it. In the tenth, Simms needed a break from a low blow. Then he ate mad shots and needed a standing eight, as he was leaning on the ropes. But the round ended before Ross could finish the task. The judges called it 98-91, 99-90, 99-90.

Ross is a solid 'B' guy, who could get a title shot, but would be an underdog to win a crown. Simms came what he comes to do: give rounds, throw some shots intended to hurt, just enough to be invited back, and absorb punishment.

Barry Tompkins called the action with Wallace Matthews.

SPEEDBAG I called Kelly Pavlik's manager, Cameron Dunkin, during the main event, wondering if he could see Pavlik tangling with Diaconu. Yes, I know there is a heavy weight disparity, but maybe Diac could be persuaded to drop down to 167 or so to make it happen, for big money one day. Yes, Dunkin said, he could see that pairing working well. He also told TSS that Felix Sturm is probably in the lead to meet WBC 160 pound champion Pavlik, on October 3, on HBO. Or maybe, was in the lead. Sturm is slated to take on Khoren Gover on July 11, in defense of his WBC 160 pound title, and he is saying he wants to take off two months after that. Do the math. He wouldn't then be in fight mode for an October date. This is purely personal speculation, but is Sturm sending a signal that he thinks he can't handle Pavlik? Would you not think he'd be chomping at the bit to show US fans, maybe in Atlantic City, that his showing against Oscar De la Hoya in 2004 was no fluke? Am I wrong?