Written by George Kimball
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ATLANTIC CITY --- Considering that only one of Juan Manuel Lopez's 25 fights had lasted as long as nine full rounds – and that 17 of his victims hadn't made it through three -- what odds do you suppose you might have gotten before Saturday night's 10-bout card at Boardwalk Hall that JuanMa's would be the longest bout of the night ?

Lopez was the last man standing in any case. The WBO junior bantam champion successfully defended his title, preserved his knockout skein, and made Olivier Lontchi cry uncle.

"Every fight is a learning experience, and I learned a lot in this one," said Lopez (26-0), who had knocked the game Lontchi down twice (in the second and ninth) and held a commanding 89-80 lead on all three official scorecards when Lontchi's Canadian trainer Howard Grant asked referee Alan Huggins to stop the fight after the ninth.

Although he was the one who made the entreaty, Grant revealed later that Lontchi, who had injured a rib in training, had wanted to quit after the eighth after taking a Lopez shot to the same area.

It was the first defeat suffered by Lontchi, who is now 18-1-2.

"He was very difficult," said Lopez, who outpunched his Cameroon-born foe by a whopping 244-84. "It wasn't that he threw a lot of punches, but that he was moving so effectively."

Two of the four other bouts featured on last night's PPV telecast ended in the third round, although it must be said that one result – Jorge Arce's devastating knockout of Filipino Fernando Lumacad -- was considerably more satisfying than the other, in which an inadvertent head-butt forced the Yuri Foreman-Cornelius Bundrage co-feature to a premature conclusion.

Meanwhile, the virtuoso performance of the evening was turned in by 23 year-old Vanes Matrorosyan, the 2004 US Olympian who utterly dominated his junior middleweight bout against veteran Andrey Tsurkan for the six rounds it lasted, forcing the Ukrainian's corner to run up the white flag.

The Top Rank card was officially labeled Latin Fury 9, but after Arce's performance might have been rechristened "And the Horse You Rode In On."

Arce was cut following a second-round collision of heads, but brought matters to a swift conclusion a round later. Early in the third he waved a jab at Lumacad, and then thumbed his mesmerized opponent with a sneaky right behind it that left him for dead.

Arce, who was boxing under trainer Nacho Beristain for the first time, said his game plan had been to box Lumacad, "but when I saw the opening for the right I threw the most tremendous right hand I've ever thrown in my life."

The IBF junior middleweight eliminator between Foreman and K-9 Bundrage appears to have eliminated both from title contention, at least for the present. Foreman sustained a serious cut along his right eyebrow after a second-round collision of heads, and when the wound caused Eddie Cotton to halt the bout a round later, not enough rounds were in the books to allow for a tally of the scorecards.

The result goes into the books as No Decision, and if the IBF sticks to its guns, a rematch would seem likely. (Though it seems unlikely that last night's crowd, which was already booing when the bout was in its second minute, would likely vote for one.)

Although Cotton ruled that the damage had come from an butt, Foreman and Bundrage accused one another of having initiated the damage.

"Whichever it was, it wasn't intentional," said K-9's cornerman Javon Hill.

Foreman (27-0) called the outcome "extremely disappointing.

"I'd trained really hard for this fight," he said, expecting that it would in lead to a mandatory fight against Cory Spinks. Instead it now appears that it may lead to a mandatory fight against Cornelius Bundrage.

The IBF, by the way has a rule requiring participants in title fights (and official eliminators, which the Foreman-Bundrage fight was) to re-weigh on the day of a fight ensure that they have gained no more than ten pounds over what they did at the previous day's weigh-in.

But until three stars appeared in the sky on fight night Foreman's fundamentalist strain of Orthodox Judaism required not only abstinence from "work," but barred the use of electricity. Since Foreman wouldn't leave his room, a scale had to be brought to his hotel. It couldn't be the digital scale he weighed in on Friday, but a plain, old-fashioned bathroom scale. Moreover, since Foreman couldn't speak on the telephone, the entire arrangement had to be brokered through an infidel in his camp.

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With fifteen seconds left to fight in the sixth of a scheduled 10-rounder, Ron Katz, the matchmaker for Joe DiGuardia's Star Promotions, made his way through the ringside seats to hailing distance of Andrey Tsurikan's corner.

For three rounds Vanes Martirosyan had contented himself with making Tsurkan look silly, leading him on a merry chase around the ring and pausing just long enough to flick out with the occasional teasing jab.

But for the last three Martirosyan had been inflicting actual damage as well. Although still allowing Tsurkan to move forward, now he would stop, plant, and fire, and he wasn't missing much of anything.

“Mikey!” Katz summoned the attention of Tsurkan trainer Mike Skowronski, before shaking his head and waving his arms in the universal gesture of surrender.

When the bell rang Skowronski allowed Tsurkan to take a seat on his stool before summoning referee Steve Smoger and apprising him of the capitulation. Although it was announced to to the crowd that the referee had stopped the fight on the advice of the ringside physician, Dr. Eric Wormser, in fact it was Mikey Skowronski who stopped it – at the urging of Katz, a man not generally disposed to humanitarian gestures.

“Aw, he’s too nice a kid,” said Katz of Tsurkan, whose eyes were both puffy and discolored from the beating he was taking. “Everybody knows how tough Tsurkan, but at least he used to throw punches. Tonight he wasn’t even doing that.”

Although assistant trainer Jesse Reid was the chief second in his corner Saturday night, Martiroysyan, now 25-0, revealed that early that morning he had phoned Freddie Roach, who had remained in California to work with Amir Khan this weekend.

“We talked about everything I would do in this fight,” said Martirosyan. “Box, move, apply pressure. I could tell right from the start I was going to knock this guy out.”

Tsurkan falls to 26-5 with the loss.

Russian middleweight Matt Korobov (7-0) scored a first-round KO over Californian Benjamin Diaz (9-3-2), but he might have gotten more work (and certainly would have saved Arum some money) had he just gone three minutes with a heavy bag. Diaz went down seconds into the fight, apparently from a gust of wind that blew through a door. A minute into the bout a Korobov left caught him right on the schnozz, and when Korobov dug him with a left to the ribs a few seconds later it was plain that the end was near.

Diaz pitched forward and buried his face in the canvas, but eventually rose by the count of seven. At this point he realized that if he stayed on his feet there was a distinct chance referee Brian O’Melia might make him fight again, and re-assumed his position on the canvas, where O’Melia obligingly counted him out.

And Korobov-Diaz was positively elegant compared to another ungainly minute-and-a-half bout that followed it. Puerto Rican Carlos Negron remained unbeaten at 3-0, when, following two knockdowns of West Virginia opponent Kenneth (Boy) George, Steve Smoger intervened at 1:18 of the first. George is now 9-3-1.

Another prelim saw Puerto Rican junior lightweight Mario Santiago (20-1-1) post a unanimous decision over Gilbert Sanchez-Leon (21-7-1) of Mexicali, Mexico. Despite having two points deducted by O’Melia for low blows, Santiago handily led on all three scorecards. (John Pasquale 79-71, Barbara Perez 78-74, John Poturaj 77-74)

New Jersey junior welters Jeremy Bryan (11-0) and Michael Torres (13-0) remained undefeated, posting a pair of 6-round unanimous decisions over Josh Beeman (4-3-2) of

Providence and Humberto Tapia (13-11-1) of Tijuana, Mexico.

Puerto Rican lightweight Hector Marengo came to Atlantic City an undefeated fighter, scrappy Texas opponent Angel Rodriguez a .500 one, and both left that way after the judges split three ways in ruling their 6-round prelim a draw. Perez had it 58-56 for Rodgriguez, Pasquale the same score for Marengo, while Potruaj had it even at 57-all. Marengo (5-0-3) incurred his third career draw, while Rodriguez returned to Texas 3-3-2.

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LATIN FURY 9

BOARDWALK HALL

ATLANTIC CITY, NJ

June 27, 2009

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: Juan Manuel Marquez, 121 1/2, Caguas, Puerto Rico vs. Olivier Lontchi, 120, Cameroon (WBO title)

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Yuri Foreman, 154, Gamel, Belarus No Decision vs. Cornelius Bundrage, 153 1/2, Detroit (3)

Vanes Martirosyan, 154 1/2, Glendale, Calif. TKO'd Andrey Tsurkan, 154, Lugansk, Ukraine (6)

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: Jorge Arce, 115, Los Mochia, Mex. KO'd Fernando Lumacad, 114 1/2, General Santos City, Philippines (2)

CRUISERWEIGHTS: Carlos Negron, 184, San Juan, P.R. TKO'd Kenneth George, 181, Elkins, W.Va. (1)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Matt Korobov, 162 1/2, Orotukan, Russia KO'd Benjamin Diaz, 162 1/2, Maywood, Calif. (1)

WELTERWEIGHTS: Jeremy Bryan, 140 1/2, Paterson, N.J. dec. Josh Beeman, 141, Providence, RI (6)

Michael Torres, 140 1/2, Jersey City, NJ dec. Humberto Tapia, 140 1/2, Tijuana, Mexico (6)

LIGHTWEIGHTS: Hector Marengo, 133 1/2, Arecibo, P.R. drew with Angel Rodriguez, 133 1/2, Houston, Tex.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: Mario Santiago, 128 1/2, Ponce, P.R. dec. Gilbert Sanchez-Leon, 127, Mexicali, Mex.