

Boxing venues aren't built. They're found...usually because a town has an exciting homegrown prospect on its hands and a venue must be found to capitalize. The Carroll County Agriculture Center and Shipley Arena in rural Westminster, Maryland, is currently such a place. Having hosted its first professional fight in February of this year, the 6,600-capacity venue, which is used primarily for 4-H competitions and other agricultural events, has since hosted four more widely attended fight cards.

Its fast transformation into a boxing arena is all because of light heavyweight Mark "TNT" Tucker, Jr., who grew up in nearby Eldersburg, sports a mohawk and enters the ring to "A Country Boy Can Survive" by Hank Williams, Jr. And last night, he decisioned Rubin Williams (29-8-1) to improve his record to 11-0-0.

"I love the crowd," said Tucker. "We're pretty much all from the same area."

The 21-year-old Tucker grew up around the Maryland area and has served as sparring partner for Antonio Tarver, Glenn Johnson and Paul Williams. Since turning pro in February of 2008, Tucker has knocked out seven of his opponents and amassed a local following thanks in part to the strong management by his father, Mark Tucker, Sr. These factors have helped put Tucker in line for a shot at the United States Boxing Organization (USBO) light heavyweight title, which was contingent on a victory over Williams, the most impressive of Tucker's opponents so far. However, Williams' career has been in decline since his shot at the IBF super middleweight title in 2005 ended with Jeff Lacy knocking him out. He hasn't won a fight since August of 2006, going 0-6-1 and suffering consecutive knockouts at the hands of Andre Ward, Chris Henry and Allan Gutknecht.

Early in last night's bout, it seemed as if Tucker, a southpaw, might end the fight early as well. He won round one easily, firing jabs and body shots at will. Towards the end of the second, he had Williams on the ropes with a barrage of wild punches. By the end of the third round, Williams had a nasty cut under his right eye and blood on his boxing trunks.

The cut was taken care of between rounds and held for the rest of the bout, which slowed a bit in its middle act. Tucker's camp says that was due in part to bruise his left hand in the third round.

"Early in the fight he reinjured his left hand and he was forced to rely on his jab," said Tucker, Sr.

While Tucker was able to use his right hand to control the pace of much the fight, he was susceptible to Williams' right hand leads and counterpunches. The eighth round was Williams' best, as he evaded a Tucker uppercut and responded with a left hook early in the round and put Tucker on the ropes towards the end with a multitude of shots.

TSS Prospect Watch: Mark Tucker Jr.

Written by Aaron Tallent
Friday, 17 July 2009 19:00

Tucker rebounded to control the final two rounds. Two of the final scorecards read 97-93 and another 96-94 all in favor of Tucker. Considering Williams' accomplishments during his career, Tucker was pleased with his performance.

"I thought it was one of my best fights," he said.

USBO president, Hilton Whitaker, III, attended last night's bout and Tucker, Sr has confirmed that his son's shot at the USBO title will take place at the Shipley Arena with an opponent to be determined.

"I am very excited," said Tucker. "I can't wait. I'm going to take a couple of days and I'll be back to training hard, six days a week."

On the undercard, super featherweight Gustavo Dailey (4-5-0) won a split decision over Tyrell Samuel (12-3-0); Jason Freeman(4-0-1) earned a majority decision over Dwayne McRae (4-1-0) in a heavyweight bout; 31-year-old Allan Perkins won his pro debut against Christian Davila (0-1-0); and light heavyweight Omar Sims (2-1-2) won a unanimous decision over Calvin Daughtry (0-7-0)