

One-Sided Glove Affairs

Written by Springs Toledo
Monday, 20 July 2009 19:00

“Life loves the liver of it.”

~ **Maya Angelou**

July 18, 2009. Providence-based promoter and President of Classic Entertainment & Sports Jimmy Burchfield had a birthday Friday. He took the celebration to the Twin River Event Center in Lincoln, RI where he sponsored a boxing show called “Braggin’ Rights” –and gave his cake to the patrons: tickets were slashed and included redeemable free-play at the casino. Jimmy may have regretted the whole thing as he stood in the ring and was subjected to a regrettable rendition of “Happy Birthday” by local boxing notables Joey Spina, Reinaldo Oliveira, Bobby Harris, and Vinnie Paz. Golden voices rarely accompany golden gloves, but God bless them for trying.

The first bout of the evening featured local cruiserweight Jay Holland (3-0) against thirty-six year old Billy Greenwalt (1-6) of Youngstown, OH. A left hook by Holland was enough to convince all and sundry that whatever it is in Youngstown that gave us Tommy Bell, Tony Janiro, Ray Mancini, and Kelly Pavlik was not bequeathed to Greenwalt. The bout was over in 57 seconds.

It looked like the makings of another one-sided glove affair when Diego Pereira (4-0) landed the kind of left hook to the liver of Ramon Ellis (0-3) that would convince most to quit the ring and apply for community college. Ellis’s face contorted and down he went. In a bigger casino in Las Vegas that very evening, Robert Guillen went down after Guillermo Rigondeaux landed the same shot to his liver. Such a shot has ended at least one budding acting career: When aging heavyweight Earnie Shavers was in the ring with Sylvester Stallone auditioning for the role of Clubber Lang in Rocky III, he tapped him on the liver. Stallone left the ring and threw up in the men’s room. Shavers was handed a ticket home.

Ramon Ellis assumed the classic posture of prayer and submission on one knee while the referee counted. Someone nearby commented “he ain’t getting up from that.” He’d usually be correct, though after glancing at my program, I knew he’d be wrong here:

“He’ll get up –he’s a Philly fighter.”

Guillen is from Arizona -he was counted out. Stallone is an actor –he was crazy to invite Earnie Shavers into the ring in the first place. The Philadelphian not only got up and survived the round, he landed an overhand right that Pereira later told me convinced him to “lay back and counter.” Nevertheless, I counted at least four more shots to the right upper quadrant of Ellis’s abdominal cavity, though Ellis later claimed that he was deflecting them by keeping his right elbow tightly drawn to that side. Pereira won a unanimous decision after four rounds. Ramon will have to decide whether to risk his health again for the elusive first win. After the bout, I asked him a candid question:

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“Why did you get up?”

“I wanted to win that fight! I’m not an opponent and I refuse to be an opponent” [emphasis his].

Ramon’s nickname is derived from his initials. “RTE” stands for Ramon Thomas Ellis, but is also an acronym for “Really Terrible Ending.” On Friday night, he didn’t fight well enough to win, but he did fight well enough to avoid a horizontal defeat—which would have injected his acronym with irony. In my estimation, his experiment with nomenclature isn’t bad for a man who takes shots to the liver with no thought of transferring from boxiana to academia. Diego Pereira, meanwhile, is progressing on schedule towards a master’s degree in debilitating body shots.

Super middleweight and University of Rhode Island (URI) graduate Vladine “Bad Boy” Biosse (2-0) entered the ring as if he were entering a cannon at a circus—complete with shiny robe, go-go dancing girls, swirling blue lights, and a roaring crowd hoping to gawp at the misfortune of a misplaced net or an involuntary nap. The URI mascot “Rhody the Ram” preceded Biosse down the aisle and hopped about the ring where the opponent, Frankie Reed (0-2), stood by patiently. Reed came all the way from South Carolina but looked like an envelope without an address. Two left hooks and a flying mouthpiece later, he found it on the canvas. Although he got up before the count of ten, his vim and vigor took the full count and the ref waved the fight off. Biosse embraced the hopping ram, posed on every turnbuckle, and left with nary a bead of sweat on his forehead. The crowd roared. I sat silently dithering over whether or not a proper ram hops.

The main event was scheduled to feature the rematch between Mickey Ward’s nephew Sean Eklund and the “Puerto Rican Sensation” Eddie Soto (12-0). Eklund got sick, and the ripped-and-ready Soto was matched with a slightly-built stand-in named Darrell Martin (4-10). Martin was willing to engage the Puerto Rican Sensation up to the moment he got dropped with a right hand in the second round. After that he became a poor man’s Willie Pep, though he was not unimpressive in evading the lefts, rights, ring posts, and spit bucket that Soto threw his way. However, Martin was all butterfly and no bee. Soto swung, missed, and grew frustrated, but at least he was trying. It soon became clear that Martin wasn’t concerned with the prospect of losing so much as he was with making Soto look bad winning. He even made the referee look bad refereeing after three close collisions. In the sixth, Martin kicked off his skates and decided to engage Soto in range. Soto quickly insulted him by landing another hard shot, and Martin went moving again as if nothing happened, floating to a decision loss.

The main event featured junior welterweights “Hammerin’ Hank” Lundy (14-0-1) and local favorite Josh “Steamin’” Beeman (4-4-3). At the pre-fight press conference, Beeman was anything but an accommodating host for the Philadelphian, choosing instead to dub himself the defender of the realm of Rhode Island. Lundy, the guest, couldn’t have been more insulted if his host poured coffee on his head at a tea party. He immediately morphed into a great winged dragon at the podium. The crowd of innocents gasped as he gave his word that he was going to “whoop” the local favorite’s “[beep] and knock him out.” Then he took a fiery breath, leaned into the microphone and hissed, “That’s all I have to say.” The microphone melted. The dragon stalked back to his cave to sharpen his talons.

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At fight time, Lundy literally ran down the aisle and into the ring. His imperial beard provided a pictogram for the diabolical machinations he had planned in his cave. As the dragon roved the squared circle, swirling lights popped on in the back of the event center, the crowd erupted, and the music proclaiming the impending entrance of Josh Beeman erupted even more loudly than the crowd. I had vainly hoped for a trumpet blast but was instead subjected to a cacophony of disjointed thumpings set to obnoxious bravado. My distaste for rap music went undetected as all heads were turned towards the far end of the aisle. But there was no sign of the defender of the realm...

A minute and a half passed and the cheering dwindled. Hearken thus! Before the murmuring began he appeared.

Round one saw Beeman crouching behind a palisade of arms while Lundy was shooting out a jab like a medieval dragon would a forked tongue. Lundy soon found a breach and demonstrated an understanding of siege warfare by undermining the walls before him. The ancients called it sapping. We call it body punching. Beeman accomplished little in the first round, only slinging a couple of hooks to force not victory, but temporary relief. If I were a reader of men I'd postulate that Beeman was relieved to get the first round behind him; his delayed arrival into the ring, his tentative performance, and his realization that Lundy was an undefeated Philadelphian would suggest that his nerves were a bit frayed. I don't know if Beeman knows his boxing history, but if he did he'd have had a deeper concern. See, Lundy's style is a worthy reproduction of Archie Moore's —complete with a rising jab, shoulder rolls, cross-armed defense, a concentration on the body, lots of slipping, a stance that saw his right crooked up across his chest, and of course, the imperial beard jutting out from his chin.

If Beeman was expecting to begin his noble assault after shaking loose the round one jitters, he forgot his sword. Lundy was already completely relaxed and in control to the point where he was dropping his hands, squaring off, and hitting Beeman at will. Before the bell for round three, he was dancing in time with the go-go girls stationed at the neutral corners.

Aficionados of the Sweet Science become familiar over time with the technical goings-on of a bout. The more astute among them eventually develop into uncertified psychologists. They can, for example, tell you the difference between an 'outclassed fighter' and a 'veteran counterpuncher'. An indication that a fighter is outclassed is his reluctance to engage his opponent. To be sure, veteran counter-punchers will also seem reluctant to engage, but it's purposeful. They are setting traps and demonstrating patience en route to a win. The outclassed fighter's reluctance to engage is a reflection not of strategy, but of anxiety. The whys and wherefores are quite simple: any time a fighter throws a shot, he leaves a window open. The experienced fighter will make painful deposits through those open windows until the outclassed fighter is thoroughly dissuaded from mounting an assault of his own. Inclement conditions see him batten down the hatches. For him it's a long fight.

Your eyes can also differentiate between the outclassed fighter and the veteran counter-puncher. If the fighter is lumpy, he's probably outclassed. If his visage is unmarred, he's probably implementing a grand strategy. Beeman was lumpy.

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By round four, Hammerin' Hank was living up to his audacious nickname and throwing five or six rapid-fire combinations to the body and head, spinning off, landing lead uppercuts from the outside, and switching from orthodox to southpaw. In the fifth round, the invading dragon ended the bout with a left hook to the body and then brought it up to the head. The defender of the realm absorbed both shots, then walked away from the fray on tottering legs and collapsed in a heap. His face contorted in pain and he clutched his right side. Ten seconds later, his tribulation was over.

Lundy was still channeling Archie Moore during his post-fight interview. He's a raconteur. "I'm must see TV!" he proclaimed, "I'll go into anyone's backyard with my '0' and I come out with my '0.'" When asked what shot finished Beeman, he said it was the left hook to the body –to the liver. Lundy is officially calling out The Ring's number-one ranked Timothy Bradley.

Sloan Harrison, out of the Kingsessing Recreation Center in Philadelphia, is Lundy's trainer. He has a stable of fighters including Eric "the Outlaw" Hunter, Pedro Martinez, Brian Cohen, and has also worked with Bernard Hopkins. "What I love about [Lundy]," Harrison offered, "is that he listens in the gym, he's a nice, clean-cut guy, and in the fight he follows instructions." No faint praise from a trainer who has been plying his trade in Philadelphia boxing gyms for over thirty years.

Among his favorite fighters is none other than Archie Moore.

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