

Isaac Hlatshwayo Wins Rematch Over Delvin Rodriguez

Written by George Kimball
Saturday, 01 August 2009 19:00

UNCASVILLE, Conn. --- Boxing writers aren't supposed to during a fight unless they have a big bet on the outcome, but if some of the ringside media contingent at the Mohegan Sun Saturday seemed to have abandoned their professionalism to openly root for Delvin Rodriguez, there was an explanation for their emotional investment:

They were probably just hoping they might never have to spell H-L-A-T-S-H-W-A-Y-O again.

They'd better get used to it. Isaac Hlatshwayo, a 31-year old Shiassi warrior from Soweto, accomplished on Rodriguez' turf in Connecticut what he hadn't been able to do on his own in South Africa last fall -- to wit, get one more judge on his side.

Hlatshwayo captured a split decision in Saturday night's bout at the Mohegan Sun Arena to win the IBF welterweight title. The belt had been vacated two months earlier when the organization stripped Joshua Clottey for fighting Miguel Cotto rather than Hlatshwayo, and ordered a rematch of last year's draw at Kempton Park.

In their earlier bout, the judges had split three ways to produce a draw, but this time Hlatshwayo made his case effectively enough that he carried eight rounds on the cards of American judge Tony Paolillo (116-112) and South African Isaac Tshabalala (116-113). (The Sweet Science scorecard also favored Hlatshwayo 116-112.) The third judge, Glenn Feldmann, had Rodriguez by a 115-113 margin.

There were no knockdowns, and while Hlatshwayo appeared to extend his dominance as the bout wore on, it was at least in part because Rodriguez' game plan seemed to wander astray. For the first few rounds he had maintained his range and out boxed his foe while maintaining an effective distance, but as the evening wore on, Hlatshwayo not only seemed to find answers for Rodriguez' attack (most of which relied on one hand, his left), but was increasingly able to lure his foe into close quarters. Hlatshwayo is one of those fellows who would love to have all his fights phone booth-sized rights, and on this night Delvin was all too willing to accommodate him.

Whenever the two fell to grappling in mid-ring, which was often, referee Steve Smoger seemed more than willing to let them work their own way out of it, and Hlatshwayo is pretty good at this stuff. There would be a clinch, with the two boxers hanging all over each other, and the next thing you'd see would be Rodriguez' head snapping up from another sneaky uppercut. By the late rounds it had become evident that Rodriguez was playing into Hlatshwayo's hands by fighting the South African's fights.

By the 11th Rodriguez' frustration had reached the point that he took one wild swing that missed but let him into a 380-degree pirouette. Hlatshwayo was so transfixed by the sight that he didn't even try to hit him until he'd stopped spinning. The penultimate round also saw an untoward moment when Smoger, moving in to break a clinch, was in the process of pulling Rodriguez away when Hlatshwayo landed a punch to the back of Delvin's head. The incident,

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curiously didn't merit so much as a warning.

Even though the audience was solidly lined up behind Rodriguez, who was born in the Dominican Republic but lives down the road in Danbury, their disappointment at the verdict was somewhat muted. For Hlatshwayo, now 29-1-1, it was his first legitimate world championship after a couple of flings with IBO belts. Three years ago in Florida he had defeated lightweight champion-to-be Nate Campbell on a split decision, but later in 2006 he lost convincingly to another champion-in--waiting, Kendall Holt.

Rodriguez goes back to the drawing board with a 24-3-2 record.

In the co-feature of Joe DiGuardia's card at the Connecticut casino, Providence junior middle Demetrius (Boo-Boo) Andrade won his sixth straight since turning pro after the 2008 Beijing Olympics, knocking out an overmatched Chad Greenleaf (11-13-1) at 1:38 of the second. Boo-Boo, who had treated Greenleaf like a punching bag in a furious first round, and already knocked him down once in the second, landed a left uppercut followed by a right to the body. Greenleaf was still crawling around on the floor when referee Benjy Esteves reached the magic number.

New Yorker Maureen Shea had had six months to lick her wounds after suffering her first career loss on the Cotto-Jennings card at Madison Square Garden, but Star Boxing matchmaker Ron Katz didn't do her any favors with his selection of an opponent for her comeback fight. Lindsay Garbett, a muscular Canadian with a punishing left hook, may have been the best 2-2- woman fighter in captivity, and she took up right where Kina Malpartida had left off back in February, hammering Shea from pillar to post as long as it lasted. Garbett had won each of the first six rounds on the cards of all three judges when she delivered her coup de grace -- a left hook followed by a straight right -- in the seventh. Although Shea struggled to her feet, she was plainly done, and Danny Schiavone halted the action at 1:52 of the seventh. Shea saw her record drop to 13-2.

Another local, Norwalk super-middle Tarvis Simms, is the identical twin of former WBA junior middleweight Travis Simms. It would be hard to tell the Simms brothers apart without putting gloves on them, at which point the difference would become immediately apparent. Tarvis, who has had 26 fights in more than a dozen years since the brothers turned pro, took Saturday's bout against Marcus Upshaw on a day's notice, and struggled to a split decision win over 8 rounds.

Feldman and Don Trella both favored Simms by 77-74, while Julie Lederman scored it 76-75 for Upshaw. Simms is now 25-0-1, while Upshaw fell to 11-4-1.

Philadelphia junior middle Raymond Serrano improved to 10-0 with a third-round TKO of Jessie Davis (11-14) of Savannah, Tenn. Serrano had already knocked Davis down with a left-right combination earlier in the third, and when action resumed, he hurt him with a solid left Davis seemed helpless to elude, leading Schiavone to stop their fight at 2:02 of the round.

Yathomas Riley, a Panamanian-born light heavy from the Bronx, kept his perfect record intact

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by knocking out journeyman Tiwon Taylor (26-16-1) of Las Vegas at the end of the first in their scheduled 6-rounder. Riley (7-0), who had already put Taylor down earlier in the round, unloaded a right precisely at the bell. Taylor did struggle to his feet, but Esteves, recognizing that he was in no condition to continue, waved it off without a count.

Pennsylvanian Eliud Torres and 19 year-old North Carolinian Dominick DeSanto came to their 4-rounder as evenly matched as could be and left the same way. DeSanto floored Torres with a left in the first, but Torres returned the favor in the third when he knocked the youngster on his backside with a right. The scorecards of Feldman, Trella, and Tom Carasone all read 37-37, producing a rare unanimous draw. Torres is 2-1-2, DeSanto 2-1-1.

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MOHEGAN SUN ARENA

UNCASVILLE, Conn.

August 1, 2009

WELTERWEIGHTS: Delvin Rodriguez, 147, Danbury, Conn. dcc. Isaac Hlatshwayo, 146 1/4 Sweto, South African (12)) (wins Vacant IBF title)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: Yathomas Riley, 175 1/2, Bronx, NY KO'd Tiwon Taylor, 180, Las Vegas, Nev. (1)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Tarvis Simms 167 1/4, Norwalk, Conn. dec. Marcus Upshaw, 162 1/4, Jacksonville, Fla. (8)

JUNIOR MIDDLES: Demetrius Andrade, 153 3/4, Providence RI KO'd Chad Greenleaf, 154 3/4, Parkersburg, W.Va. (2)

Raymond Serrano, 149, Philadelphia, Pa. TKO'd Jessie Davis, 150, Savannah, Tenn. (3)

JUNIOR WELTERS: Dominic DeSanto, 136, New Haven, Conn. Drew with Eliud Torres, 136, Allentown, Pa. (4)j

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: Lindsay Garbatt, 128, Courtice, Ontario KO'd Maureen Shea, 126 1/4, Bronx, NY (7)