

What Was He Looking At?

Written by Ron Borges
Monday, 03 August 2009 19:00

The good news is it wasn't all bad news for the junior welterweight division Saturday night on SHOWTIME.

On the positive side, World Boxing Organization junior welterweight champion Timothy Bradley looked good for the brief period of time he was defending his share of the 140-pound title against former lightweight champion Nate Campbell while newly crowned WBC title holder Devon Alexander looked even better beating up former champion Junior Witter to claim what was a vacant throne room.

As for the bad news, referee David Mendoza apparently wasn't looking at all because he was the only guy in Rancho Mirage, CA. who didn't see Bradley's bald head slam into Campbell's accidentally, causing a deep cut over Campbell's left eye in the third round that Mendoza incorrectly ruled had been caused by a punch. When Campbell complained of impaired vision, Mendoza raised Bradley's hand, a victory that should become a no-contest if the California Athletic Commission still exists.

Football long ago proved the efficacy of instant replay and in no sport might it be more helpful than boxing. Certainly it could not cure all the sport's ills but Saturday night it would have given Mendoza clear evidence to overturn himself.

br />Quite naturally, Campbell's advisors immediately began efforts to file a protest and his promoter, the bombastic Don King, was in the ring hollering that Campbell had to fight two people, Bradley and Mendoza. As usual that was over the top and far from accurate. Mendoza made an innocent mistake. A bad one to be sure but that hardly made him part of some conspiracy to deny the aging Campbell his due.

Bradley (25-0, 12 KO) looked in the early going like he might take care of that himself with no help needed from anyone else. While it is fair to point out that many things can change in the course of a 12-round fight, the three completed ones belonged so utterly and completely to the young champion it is difficult to extrapolate a way Campbell (33-6-1, 25 KO) might have altered the outcome.

At 25, Bradley was faster, more agile, a more accurate puncher and totally on top of both his game and Campbell's. Now 37, Campbell had been forced to give up his unified lightweight title a few months ago after no longer being able to make the 135-pound limit and in this fight the ravages of boxing seemed to be clear for the first time. Making weight was not his problem in Rancho Mirage. Making a fight of it was.

Although Campbell was coming off brilliant performances against Juan Diaz and Ali Funeka, who he beat 24 hours after having to give up the lightweight title they were scheduled to fight over because of his problems on the scales, he simply looked used up against Bradley, who may be the best of the 140-pound champions not named Manny Pacquiao.

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In fact, the cut was almost a blessing because Bradley had dominated the third round, pinning the almost defenseless Campbell along the ropes and pummeling his head and body when they cracked heads and blood began to spurt. Perhaps Mendoza simply assumed the cut had to come from the number of punches Bradley had landed but the only way that cut came from a punch was if Bradley's head was inside his glove, which it was not.

What is most interesting is not how the fight went but how it ended. Had it gone on, the conclusion seemed to already be written. But now that Campbell can claim foul might he also get a rematch?

None is required because he was not the mandatory challenger so Bradley can avoid him if he'd like but why would he? The only reason would be if no one is willing to pay him to beat about Campbell for a while longer. If they are, he might as well take it because there is nothing Campbell did during the nine minutes they were together that should convince Bradley or his promoter, Gary Shaw, that there is much to fear from the 37-year-old former champion.

The same may not be true of Alexander, another King fighter who has been grossly under promoted. He has been a top-flight junior welterweight for more than a year but he has seldom been seen on national television and until getting his shot against Witter, who coincidentally is the man Bradley stopped to win the WBO title last year in England, was all but unknown except to boxing aficionados.

In this moment he was brilliant, easily solving the problems of Witter's unpredictable style. If Witter was just a runner one could say he moves well but he is a guy who holds, wrestles, switches back and forth between southpaw and traditional styles for no good end and is generally horrendous to watch.

Given that, the 22-year-old Alexander (19-0, 12 KO) gets extra points from this corner because he rid the ring of the guy in eight rounds, thereby freeing observers from another 12 minutes of having to watch Witter (37-3-2, 22 KO) do we know not what.

Alexander is not known for his punching power but he twice hurt Witter badly and by the eighth round had him holding on for dear life. In fact, he held on so fiercely he was sternly reprimanded by the referee before the close of the eighth round.

So sternly it seemed that he decided he'd had enough and quit on his stool, a decision supported by the judges' cards. One had Alexander winning all eight rounds while the other two fellows, perhaps wishing a visitor to these shores well, gave Witter one round for his trouble.

Speaking of trouble, what kind of trouble might the left-handed Alexander give Bradley if the two chose to meet in a unification fight? That would be a battle of young lions and, frankly, is the only fight that makes real sense for either of them.

It would cost one their title and very likely both will be forced to make some meaningless mandatory defense first but with Pacquiao having moved up to challenge WBO welterweight champion Miguel Cotton it is the one fight in the division someone might pay to watch. And,

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more importantly, to televise.