

SHUTOUT: Vitali Klitschko Dominates Overmatched Arreola

Written by Michael Woods

Friday, 25 September 2009 19:00

Shall we begin a lobbying campaign? Should we get on Facebook, and Twitter, and hire Paulie Malignaggi to help us convince the suits to make the only fight that will result in a competitive matchup: Vitali Klitschko versus his little brother Wladimir? Because fight fans have to have exhausted their reservoir of hopefulness, after watching Vitali dismantle challenger Cris Arreola in the main event Saturday night at the Staples Center in Los Angeles, which was televised by HBO. Arreola had been presented as a viable challenger to the elder Klitschko by some pundits, though most looked long and hard at his resume and concluded that he didn't have nearly enough seasoning or athleticism to get past the wily Klitschko. But Vitali used his reach and excess of ring generalship to absolutely dominate the American, who'd entered with an unbeaten record built against foes in another class than Klitschko's, and the hopes of fight fans wishing for a return to form for US heavyweights or even just some competitive rounds involving the Klitschkos were dashed again. After ten rounds of one-sided pugilism, Arreola's corner told the referee that they'd seen enough, and the official mercifully pulled the plug.

TSS-EM didn't give Arreola a round, though he does deserve credit for his heart, as he appeared to be willing to slog through the duration of the painful exercise.

Klitschko (38-2) landed 301 of 802 punches, while Arreola couldn't break the century mark, hitting 86 of 331 throws against a man who used his height and reach to perfection.

So, who should we transfer our measures of hope to? Povetkin? Chambers? I am dubious that any of the gents currently gloving up and taking a spot in the top 20 could dethrone either brother K. All we can hope for is that they find themselves in a bitter row, like the Oasis brothers, and decide to duke it out. Klitschko versus Klitschko, the only hope for a dramatic heavyweight tussle. I kid, of course, I don't want the brothers to feud and fight, but you get my point. Though they don't look all that pretty, or graceful, they are both in another class compared to anybody else in the game today.

In the first round, the 38-year-old Klitschko (252 pounds) kept the jiggly Arreola (251 pounds) at bay with a long jab, and hooks which shoved the challenger out of punching range. Vitali came underneath with long right uppercut a few times, as well. The 28-year-old Arreola was in his face, but was unsuccessful in getting inside the long arms of the Ukrainian. In the second, V kept his left low, not fearful that he'd get tagged. V kept Arreola off balance, and he'd step off a few steps if Arreola got within range to launch. Maybe V would get winded soon? The champion looked completely confident that he had matters in hand, it appeared. Trainer Fritz Sdunek told him to use the left "again and again, evade him and then counter. It's easy." V landed 77 punches to Arreola's 17 after two rounds. V's mouth was open but it usually is early on in his fights. In the third, Arreola got the crowd buzzing with a right hand counter, delivered with V's back to the ropes. But Arreola's straight up posture, and lack of slipping weren't encouraging to those who gave him a strong shot at the upset. "Pick it up, don't get careless, I need you to be aggressive but smart," Arreola trainer Henry Ramirez told him after the round.

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In the fourth round, Arreola bum-rushed V, and had the titlist somewhat awkwardly evacuating the spot on the canvas. A clean left hook tested V's chin. The distance between the men closed noticeably with 1:30 left, but V kept scoring with jabs, hooks and the odd one-two. In the fifth, a Vitali right had Arreola shaking his head, indicating that he was not fazed. "He effin runs a lot," the challenger complained in his corner after the round. In the sixth, the crowd started getting more restless, because of the one-sided nature of the event. Yes, Arreola was in V's face, but beyond that, where were the punches in bunches his fans expected? V's hands, when not thudding on Arreola's face, were virtually by his sides.

In the seventh, V kept up the tactics that got him to this point, a shutout win. He moved left and right, mixing it up, and was the master of the distance between the combatants. OK, so his punches weren't usually delivered with all his might, but that's by design--Klitschko arm punches, so his feet are free to help him get out of Dodge before the opposing gunslinger unholsters. The fight featured almost zero clinches, testament to V's consistent movement, and Arreola's immobility. Arreola landed a decent left at 1:40, giving his fans cause to hold onto hope for another spell in the eighth. Blood appeared in Arreola's nose and mouth, and dribbled down his belly. The ref asked the doctor to look at the challenger after the round. "Keep doing what you're doing," Ramirez said. "Keep imposing yourself on him." Arreola landed 13 to V's 20 in this frame. In the ninth, V was in total control, and he perhaps sensed he could score a stoppage. Again, the ref worried about Arreola, peering at him intensely as he walked him to his corner. Arreola eagerly hopped up from his stool to try again to start the tenth. He stalked the champ with solid vigor, considering he'd been evilly basted for 27 minutes to that point. But his body language spoke--V's punches were backing him up a half step more than before, his nose dripped more heavily. Would someone pull the plug on this futility? Yes, in fact. His corner and the referee were in agreement. Arreola's chances of pulling off a Hail Mary stunner had evaporated to nil. That was it.

Faces in the crowd: Ahnold (booed) Sly, Tyson (cheered), Hayden Panettiere (booed), Mickey Rourke (cheered), Kobe (cheered) and Pete Rose (cheered).

Arreola made a decent point in an interview that aired before his bout, which touched on his fondness for food and drink. "Michael Phelps smokin' weed, why can't I drink a beer, that guy's still settin' record, why can't I drink a beer?" he asked rhetorically. "It's a problem but at the same time it's not. I work hard, I'm gonna play hard," he reasoned. We learned that trainer Darryl Hudson was hired to work with Arreola, who put the fighter on two-a-days. Some will recall that Hudson used to work with Shane Mosley, and that he subsequently aimed a lawsuit at Mosley for implying that Hudson gave him illegal performance enhancing substances, and didn't inform him of the nature of the chemicals. Mosley was ensnared in the BALCO steroid/HGH scandal in 2003.

Before Klitschko-Arreola, Jim Lampley chatted via satellite with Floyd Mayweather. The interview went smoothly. There was no beefing, as Lampley asked questions not likely to elicit snarls or evasion from Floyd. Lampley lauded Floyd's work against Marquez, pointed out that a million homes connected to the PPV, and he didn't interject when Floyd talked up Mayweather Promotions. But then...Lampley did go there. He brought up Shane Mosley's post-fight parachute drop, but Mayweather was mellow in his response, basically blaming the incident on

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Bernard Hopkins' incitement. "I wish him nothing but the best in his career," Floyd said. Floyd said, "It's not about the money, it's about the love of the sport, I love the sport of boxing, but of course it's gotta make business sense" when discussing his next move. Mayweather said he tried to fight Mosley in 1999 and 2006, and it didn't happen because Mosley didn't want it to.

Then came something of a jaw-dropper. "I want to apologize to you Jim, and Larry Merchant and Emanuel Steward and Max Kellerman for what happened," Mayweather said. "Floyd, we accept your apology, we're observers of your career with interest and tremendously excited about everything you've accomplished and what we look forward to in your future," Lampley replied. "I truly apologize," Mayweather repeated.

Didn't see that one coming. Would have liked to be a bug on the wall to determine what prompted that mea culpa. Did some wise counsel from advisors result in Floyd offering that olive branch? Did he come to regret his pre-fight slams against Merchant and Steward, and previous slaps at Lampley, and his after-fight skirmish with Kellerman to the extent that his conscience willed him to apologize?

SPEEDBAG Merchant acknowledged that he went out on a leaf, not a limb, when he said that Arreola could easily win. He didn't think V could fight like this at this age, he said. Larry said that Arreola "did give a helluva good effort but he was just in with a better and bigger man." Amen.

Come back for David Avila's ringside report.