

Allan Green Hands Late Sub Tarvis Simms His First Loss

Written by Michael Woods
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One can't fault Allan Green for the manner in which he handled Tarvis Simms in the ShoBox main event at the First Council Casino in Newkirk, Oklahoma. Green is on the cusp of a title shot for some sanctioning body or another, so the Oklahoman played it safe and smart against a wise pugilist in Simms, who subbed in for crude banger Victor Oganov a week before the scrap. There were pockets of action, but mostly Green used his frame and conditioning to good advantage without taking too many risks. The judges liked Green's work, giving him a 98-92, 98-91 and 97-93 unanimous nod.

Green (age 30; 28-1 with 20 KOs entering; from Oklahoma) was 167 ½ pounds, while Simms (age 38; 25-0-1 with 11 KOs coming in; from Connecticut) weighed 168 ¾ pounds.

In the first, the half-a-head taller Green took it to Simms, who took the fight on six days notice after Victor Oganov pulled out due to injury. Simms, who fights lefty but went righty in the first, served notice he wasn't there to just pick up a payday, with a couple stiff jabs. Simms, the identical twin of former junior middleweight titlist Travis Simms, ate a hook coming in to start the second. It was hard to see how he'd be able to stay undefeated, being shorter, over his optimum weight, fighting on short notice, against a more powerful foe. He did work a jab, and looked composed as he slipped some Green power shot attempts in the third. Simms, who by the way debuted way back in 1997, as a super middle is a cutie—he slips shots well, and is adept at frustrating his opponents' rhythm. In the fourth, we saw Green dipping down to place left hooks to the body, and the head. Through five, Simms' stamina seemed solid. He went southpaw in the sixth, and threw Green off his game. Green asked trainer John David Jackson how to fight a lefty after the round. In the seventh, Green didn't look discombobulated but the switch had altered the tone for sure. In the eighth, the tone had shifted back. Green's power edge stood out for most of the round. Then three connects had Green on the ropes with ten seconds to go, though a right uppercut knocked Simms back a step. In the ninth, Simms went back to fighting righty. In the tenth and final round, the men hugged for too long to start the round. Simms was back as a lefty, and he smacked Green with one of those lefts, making the crowd buzz. Green, surprisingly, didn't look to close the show in his home state with fireworks. We'd go to the cards.

Antwone Smith (age 22; 16-1-1 with 8 KOs entering; 147 ½; living in Florida) met Henry Crawford (age 28; 22-0-1 with 9 KOs; 146 ½ pounds; living in NJ) in a scheduled tenner. Crawford looked to be of a higher caliber early, but he gassed somewhat, and Smith stepped it up. He put Crawford down in the sixth, and again in the ninth. The Crawford corner then did what the ref should have done, and pulled the plug, giving Smith a TKO9 victory after nine completed rounds. The story of this fight, to me, was that this event was an indictment of the Citizen Potawatomi Athletic Commission, headed by Aaron Capps and Jack Barrett. The referee, Gerald Ritter, let a clearly diminished Crawford fight past the point of wisdom, and it appeared that no physician evaluated the man after he'd absorbed a frightening level of punishment. Showtime should seriously re-consider, I offer, whether this jurisdiction is a proper location for their programs. Based on what we saw in this fight, I am not at all sure it is.

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In the first, we saw that Smith looked physically a weight class less than Crawford. Both men showed quick hands, with Crawford slightly faster. Both men's jab meant business, but Crawford tacked on a right hand several times and took the round. In the second, Crawford pushed off with his lead shoulder, a sneaky-smart move, time and again. Smith is a slow starter, so maybe he was warming up. In the third, Crawford's movement stood out. He got the angles he wanted usually, and just looked so confident as he did his thing. A butt caused a nasty lump over Smith's left eye, and his cornerman didn't have an Enswell to reduce the swelling, it appeared. In round four, Smith started faster. He ripped left hooks, but Crawford is a darned fine defender. A body shot informed Crawford that his foe was in the game.

In the fifth, Crawford's confidence wasn't as evident. Smith stalked him, and it seemed like the balance of power had flip-flopped. "Gimme that swagger," Crawford's trainer Mikey Skowronski said after the round. The sixth round saw Crawford hurt. His gloves touched the canvas at 2:20. His hands were down, and he was eating clean blows, and the ref could've stepped in. "He should stop the fight," Tarver said with a minute left. His mouthpiece was hanging out of his mouth, and his hands were at his sides as he ate power shots, and still referee Gerald Ritter didn't step in. Oh, he did to get the mouthpiece that fell out of his mouth. The bell rang to end the round, some way, some how. Mikey told Crawford that he'd stop the fight if things continued the same way. And it appeared that no doctor examined Crawford after the round. If that was indeed the case, then state authorities NEED TO TAKE A HARD LOOK AT THE COMMISSION AND THE PERSONNEL OVERSSEING BOXING. In round seven, Crawford was a bit more active and awake. His legs were under him, and Smith wasn't as effective by any means. Newbie Kurt Menefee called out Ritter for not stopping the fight after the round; good for the new guy, for not being afraid to voice his dismay at an overly brave referee. In the eighth, Crawford looked a bit like he did early, but was helped by Smith's lack of volume. The Jersey guy moved more, and took the round. In the ninth, Smith's aggression wasn't effective much of the time. He barked with each shot, but when he walked Crawford down, much of the time he didn't make him pay. Then a right to the chin sent Crawford down with ten seconds to go. He got up, but his legs were wobbly. AND YET REF RITTER WAS READY TO LET THE FIGHT GO ON, BUT LUCKILY THE ROUND ENDED. ONCE AGAIN, IT APPEARED NO DOCTOR APPRAISED CRAWFORD. This is an egregious misconduct. Mikey asked Crawford to tell him he wanted to continue, and Crawford didn't, but not vehemently enough, and the trainer threw in the towel. THIS IS MY OPINION, LET ME BE CLEAR ABOUT IT—TO ME, GERALD RITTER IS NOT SUITED TO BE A PRO REFEREE. Crawford was out on his feet, and Ritter was ready to throw him to the wolf.

In the TV opener, Marcus Johnson (age 23; 17-0 with 14 KOs entering; 168 pounds), who lives in Texas, showed true contender style in a unanimous decision win over rock-solid journeyman Victor Villareal (age 29; 8-3-2 with 4 KOs entering; 166 ¼ pound), who lives in Colorado. The judges saw it 8071, 80-71, 80-71, for Johnson. In the first, Johnson showed zippy hands. He snapped the jab, both led and countered, and showed ample aggressiveness. Left hooks to the body hurt Villa, who was quite obviously in over his head, but only barely. In the second, Johnson closed the distance a bit more, not hard to do in the 16 foot ring. Villa stayed in the game, winging overhand rights and banging to the body with the right, as well. His jab got to the point of impact rapidly, too. And let's point out that his defense wasn't horrific; he slipped smartly periodically. Kid showed a rugged beard, as he got clipped with a bunch of sweet, tight

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right crosses through four. One wondered if Johnson wasn't consciously looking to get rounds in, or if he always fights in such a smooth, collected manner. Villa pressed forward in the sixth and I must say that he'd lasted longer and performed at a higher level than I thought possible initially. And then...Johnson sent him down at the 18 second mark, with two lefts up top, and Villa arose with a smile. Punishment had accumulated and we wondered if Villa would go the distance. Analyst Antonio Tarver was moved to compare Johnson to a "young James Toney" at the start of the seventh. Johnson still had Villa in his face to start the eighth, but the prospect from Texas switched roles and ramped it up, trying for a clean kill. No one should get down on Johnson's power; his power shots would have taken out many a man, early on. Villa has an A-level chin.