

Carl Froch Barely Edges Out Impressive Andre Dirrell Via Split Decision

Written by Michael Woods
Friday, 16 October 2009 19:00

No matter what the judges were to say after the main event at the Trent FM Arena in Nottingham, England on Saturday night between Carl Froch and Andre Dirrell, the underdog American from Michigan would have emerged as a winner. Dirrell fought as he promised he would, hard and strong, and he surpassed the expectations of most experts, who suspected that his thin resume would do him no favors against the rugged super middleweight champion Froch. His hand speed, his movement, his unorthodoxy gave Froch fits, and the fans in attendance were chewing their nails as the judges' cards were tallied.

The scores tumbled forth from Jimmy Lennon Jr: a split decision: Alejandro Rochin saw it 114-113 Dirrell, Massimo Barrovecchio scored it 115-112 Froch and the tiebreaker from Daniel Van de Wiele was 115-112, for Froch. And while Dirrell bowed his head, looking a bit deflated, TSS had to hope he exulted afterwards, because his effort was exemplary, and our card echoed Rochin's 114-113 Dirrell judgment.

"I know I boxed him enough to gain a decision, but it didn't go my way," Dirrell told Jim Gray afterwards. He said he still wasn't sure why the ref Hector Afu, who didn't do a good job at all, to put it mildly, took a point from him in the tenth round. Froch said I can't believe it was a split decision, and called out Dirrell for not standing and trading. He said Dirrell complained excessively to the ref, and generally, came off a sore winner. Froch fans will likely see it differently, but the loser probably emerges with more upside after this scrap. "I'm looking forward to fighting Kessler, there you've got a proud warrior, who will stand and have a fight," Froch said, in a slap at Dirrell.

The 32-year-old Froch, the WBC super middleweight champion, weighed 167 1/4 while the 26-year-old Dirrell was 167 1/2, after coming in heavy at the weigh in.

In the first round, Dirrell kept his left low, and snapped crisp jabs intermittently. Froch also kept his left low, and jabbed the the torso, head, and then torso again. Dirrell jabbered at Froch, playing the impudent interloper unafraid of entering a lion's den. The Brit Froch drew a roar from his people with a combo when Dirrell went lefty, but it was a close round. In the second, Froch both lead and countered, and again wasn't put off by Dirrell going lefty. Froch came in 3-0 against lefties, for the record. Dirrell's handspeed edge was obvious from Scotland, and it also was apparent that he wasn't overwhelmed by the big stage in enemy territory. In the third, Froch looked to press more, close the distance. But Dirrell whacked him with a few counters, and made Froch look quite immobile in comparison. Dirrell drew hoots from the crowd for getting out of dodge in a somewhat hasty manner, and in one exit burst Froch caught him clean. In the fourth, we saw some blood on Dirrell's lip and his nose. Dirrell's swift lateral movement signaled he wasn't keen on trading, and told Froch to step it up. In the fifth, Dirrell got thrown down by Froch, and the ref warned the hometown. This round, Dirrell didn't move as much. He was mixing up his tactics, and keeping Froch guessing. His straight left to the body was also an effective weapon. In the sixth, Dirrell made Froch miss badly, and the champ was frustrated. Dirrell caught Froch with a left hand, and his confidence at this juncture was sky high. There

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were instances of clinching, grabbing, wrestling in just about every round, and the ref had to be ready to intercede at all times.

In the seventh, the mover Dirrell looked energized. Froch would box him into a corner, but Dirrell would slither away, untouched. Froch lured Dirrell into a scrum, a rumble, with a minute to go. Froch held and hit and Dirrell complained as he was being smacked, not a good move. He needed to stay focused, and not let it deteriorate into a bar brawl. Dirrell took back the momentum some with a left hook, clean, at the end of the round. In the eighth, Froch didn't manage to lure Dirrell into an ugly stanza early. Then he held Dirrell down, and rammed the back of his head with a right. It was so obvious, he definitively should have had a point deducted, no doubt about it. But he was at home and enjoyed that edge in that instance. Dirrell rubbed Froch with a forearm in response. Then Froch landed a left hook, but Dirrell didn't seem perturbed by it. In the ninth, Dirrell switched stance a few times, and threw in mid-switch. He looks wild doing it, but he pulls it off. Dirrell did look a bit more tired. Froch was warned for holding and hitting, and for sure, Team Dirrell will bring Froch's tactics up after the bout. Froch took a momentum advantage in this round.

In the 10th, Dirrell looked more juiced than the round before. The ref then took a point from Dirrell, for holding, and there was no cause for it. There will be screams, and rightly so, about partisanship. Dirrell then blasted Froch with a sharp left, and two rights, trying mightily to regain that point. He hurt Froch, with a left cross at the end of the round. That should've evened up the round. In the 11th, the first time Dirrell went into the 11th, the American slipped Froch combos, and came out with a left hook answer. Froch ate left hands, three in a row, at the midway point. He fired a heavy hook in retort. Dirrell was landing clean, effective blows, and judges without a preference for Froch would have to see that. Froch threw right after the bell, but no point or warning was forthcoming. Dirrell's corner then told him to take out Froch, smartly saying he wouldn't get a decision. TSS fully agreed with that advice. In the 12th, Dirrell didn't press too heavily. Both men still had ample energy, surprisingly. My DVR then cut off, but I taped Dexter, so I saw the ending. We'd go to the cards.