

Hard Hitting On Froch-Dirrell

Written by Frank Lotierzo
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It's too bad that Showtime's Super Six tournament doesn't have a provision for getting rid of fighters—regardless whether they win, lose, or draw—who are so terrible that they don't belong among the super middleweight elite. If such a provision were written into the contracts, we'd never have to watch either Carl Froch or Andre Dirrell fight again. I know that after Saturday night's fight, I'm dreading their next appearances. They're both inexperienced and have no shot to win the tournament.

Where did Froch earn the reputation as someone who could fight at the upper-tier level? Aside from fouling and mauling, he didn't show me a thing. He may have the heart of a fighter, but none of the corresponding skill. He's slow, and seems to rely on one not very powerful punch at a time. He's not bad at clubbing on the back of the neck, but his opponent--as Froch himself mentioned in his post-fight interview--made that a little easier for him by obligingly tying up, lowering his head, and turning away. Saturday's fight exposed a lot about how limited Froch is. It's hard to imagine anyone outside of Nottingham still being a Believer.

Athleticism aside, is there anything about Andre Dirrell that indicates he can fight at the main event level? He jumps around, runs away, switches stances aimlessly between orthodox and southpaw, and throws arm punches with no plan whatsoever, only fighting in the specific moment fate happens to place him. If Froch can be credited with at least having a fighter's heart, Dirrell hasn't even earned that distinction. He was totally uninvolved at the end of the fight, saying exactly the same things he'd say before it, ("I worked my ass off. I went the extra yard.") Worked your ass off for what? Went the extra yard where?

Who should have been given the decision in Saturday's fight? Who cares? Both guys looked like six round prelim fighters. That impression was reinforced by the competency and professionalism shown by both Jermain Taylor - even though he needs to retire now and not continue on in the tournament and - Arthur Abraham in the night's earlier bout.

Think of Arthur Abraham's methodically executed fight plan against Jermain Taylor. Until the last fifteen seconds of the fight, he didn't have a spectacular night, but that's not important. Compare the long range vision that he had for his bout, along with the implementation of that vision, to the amateurish flailing and useless movement that Froch and Dirrell engaged in.

Froch, the limited brawler that he is, wants his opponent to fight him on his terms. That'd definitely work in a bar fight, but in professional boxing there are a lot of alternative ways to fight and win. Engaging and mixing with a roughhouse fighter at his own game (unless you're better at it than he is a la Robert Duran or Julio Cesar Chavez) isn't manly, it's stupid. Incidentally, although Froch will welcome a fight against an opponent who'll fight and go toe to toe with him, there are guys in the super middleweight division, two of whom happen to be in the super-six tournament, who'd be too much for Froch to handle and cope with.

Another observation from Saturday night was Andre Dirrell's corner. Showtime has been going

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on about how Andre Dirrell and his older brother Anthony were raised by their grandfather Leon Lawson, and how he took them from the streets where they were heading toward bad ends, brought them into a boxing gym, and taught them to fight. Except that he didn't teach them to fight. I'm sure Mr. Lawson is a a decent man. But if Andre Dirrell is to have any chance at all to develop into a real fighter, he needs to have a real trainer in his corner. In a situation where there's a lot of money on the line (not to mention each fighter's reputation), it was frustrating to see a fighter lose a fight he easily could have won but for lack of a sound fight plan and a brief lecture about the perils of fighting in the other guy's neighborhood.

So Saturday's reward for Carl Froch will be two points (non-kayo winners get this) and a sure beating at the hands of Mikkel Kessler in his next fight. Andre Ward doesn't get the points, of course. But he'll surely receive the beating; his next opponent will be Arthur Abraham.

When this tournament was announced it seemed like a terrific idea. Getting the best of the best together in boxing is a welcome change. After watching it's maiden fights the point system doesn't seem right for boxing. Points are for team sports. Boxing is determined by who beats whom.

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