

Kessler Gets Hometown Help, Snags UD Over Froch

Written by Michael Woods
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Mikkel Kessler pulled off that neat boxing trick of turning old overnight in his last bout, against Andre Ward in November. But on Saturday night at the MCH Messecenter Herning in Herning, Denmark, Kessler turned back the clock. He was aided in that department because he was fighting Carl Froch, a more unorthodox but less athletic hitter than Ward. Kessler was also aided by the judges, who scored the bout 117-111, 116-112, 115-113, for the hometown hero, Kessler, in a bout that could've easily been called a draw, or a win for Froch.

Froch was as classy as could be after. He told Steve Farhood that he thought he won, but admitted he could've done more. If the fight were in his homeland, he said, he would've had his hand raised.

The Viking Warrior Kessler (age 31; coming off a loss to title defense loss to Andre Ward; from Copenhagen, Denmark; 42-2 with 32 KOs entering) weighed 167 pounds, while the WBC 168 pounds champion Froch (age 32; coming off a tight win over Andre Dirrell; from Nottingham, England; 26-0 with 20 KOs entering) weighed 167 1/4 pounds at the weigh in on Friday.

In the first, Kessler, under new head trainer Jimmy Montoya, came out jabbing. Froch, left hand held low out front, did the same. Both jabbed to the body. Kessler plodded forward, while Froch looked to move more. He was warned by the ref for hitting behind the head. In the second, the Dane picked it up to start. His right hands to the body looked to be an obvious part of his strategy. Froch's jab was spot on, and he used it smartly so Kessler couldn't get set. The third and fourth were also tight ones, not much separating the two men. But Kessler's aggressiveness, to me, looked like it would speak louder to the judges if we went to the distance. The pace to this point was measured; neither man was letting it all hang out.

Kessler hit the deck in the fifth, but the ref called it a slip. Froch stepped it up, he was loose and ready to rock now. A right hit home, and Kessler felt it to his shoes. In the sixth, Kessler pressed forward harder. He looked to bull Froch into the ropes, but the Brit countered smartly. He also got off first frequently, and was ahead on this TSS card, 4-2. In round seven, Froch looked like he was taking a breather round. He worked harder late in the round to try and steal it. But Kessler was the busier man, and the crowd told him so with the loudest approval they'd shown to that point.

In the eighth, Froch was staggered noticeably by a counter right, after a looping right missed, with 50 seconds to go. He now had a cut on the bridge of his nose. I do believe that right hand to the body which Kessler chipped away with paid a dividend at this juncture. In the ninth, the distance between the men was closed; Froch didn't have the energy to maintain a safe spacing. In the 10th, we saw blood from a cut over Kessler's left eye. Froch pumped a half-ass jab more than before, and got off a decent left hook. Neither man, to this point, made much use of left hooks, or uppercuts. Kessler's defense, it must be said, was darned good. He slipped deftly, by and large. In the 11th, Kessler landed a right and left follow, and Froch answered with a three punch combo. Both men landed significant blows during periods of infighting. In the 12th, Froch had more strength. Kessler's legs looked iffier. Then he nailed Froch on the ropes. They slugged

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to the final bell. Wed go to the cards.

SPEEDBAG Someone tell Gus Johnson that we are able to see the action, that he doesnt work radio. Let the action speak sometimes, son.