

Contender Argenis Mendez Gets It Done In NYC

Written by George Kimball
Wednesday, 28 July 2010 19:00

NEW YORK --- From its very inception Lou DiBella's Broadway boxing has played upon New York's neighborhood rivalries. The promoter would argue that he is less engaged in pandering to ethnic pride than in creating new boxing fans – and he may have a point. Although the Dmitry Salitas and Yuri Foremans have long since moved on, there were yarmulkes scattered here and there in the audience at Wednesday night's edition at BB King's Blues Club, along with the odd holdover from the Paulie Malignaggi fan club.

Having noted that, the true cynic might go on to suggest that Shamir Reyes' presence in the main event owed less to the notion that his fight with Argenis Mendez might be competitive than to the fact that Reyes, despite not having won in more than five years, can still produce an enthusiastic Brooklyn following every bit as substantial, and as vocal, as that of the Dominican-born USBA 130-pound champion.

In fact, Mendez-Reyes nearly fell apart the day before, when, even before the official weigh-in it became apparent that Shamir might come in as many as seven pounds overweight for what had been scheduled as a junior lightweight fight. In the end, the matter was settled the way these things usually are in the world of boxing: In the pugilistic equivalent of land-for-peace, the scales of justice are tempered by sliding chips from the transgressor's side of the table to augment the stack of the aggrieved party.

And briefly – for about say, two minutes and 50 seconds, it appeared that Mendez might have made a bad deal for himself, as Reyes, seemingly the stronger though by far shorter man, appeared to use his weight advantage as he took the fight straight to the startled Mendez. Then, inside the ten-second warning, Shamir made one last rush at Mendez, who this time stepped calmly out of the way and swatted him with a left.

Down went Reyes, turning a 10-9 round that was all but in the bank into a 10-8 advantage for his adversary. He would never come as close to winning a round again.

Reyes fought gamely, and he was there to the finish, but in terms of sheer physical attributes he doesn't match up well against many opponents, and Mendez is a matchup even worse than most. Officially the difference in heights was only four inches, but whenever they got near enough – which wasn't often – it was clear that Mendez stands a full head taller. Given his concomitant reach advantage, he was able to bang away at Reyes, first with combinations, then with body shots, and eventually with good, old-fashioned haymakers.

Mendez (who won his USBA title, which was obviously not at stake in the over-the-weight bout, by outpointing Martin Honorio in the co-feature of the Paul Williams-Kermit Cintron card in California) isn't flashy, but he is coolly efficient, particularly when it comes to protecting his natural distance in a fight like this one.

Though his supporters were egging him on to the end, Reyes' headlong charges to get inside

Contender Argenis Mendez Gets It Done In NYC

Written by George Kimball

Wednesday, 28 July 2010 19:00

Mendez' jab were mostly futile, and he had yet another problem, not entirely of his own making, to contend with: The disparity in heights was so pronounced that even on those occasions Reyes did get inside, he literally couldn't take a step forward without the top of his head coming into direct contact with Mendez' jaw. Referee Harvey Dock repeatedly warned Reyes, but to his credit never penalized him. It's hard to imagine what Shamir might have done about it, anyway, other than growing a few inches on the spot.

In the end it was an entertaining bout, but a rout on the scorecards. Glenn Fledman somehow found it in his heart to award Reyes a round; his colleagues Waliska Roldan and John Mackaie submitted scorecards matching that of TSS' 80-71 tally. The win moved Mendez to 11-1, while Reyes is now 18-7-2.

The main event was the only one of the six fights to go the distance, which is a major upset when you consider that Gabriel Bracero was fighting in the co-feature. Bracero is undefeated, but until he pounded Floridian Raymond Betancourt into submission, he had never, in a career that goes back to 2001 (it was interrupted for more than six years while Bracero was, uh, upstate), stopped a single opponent.

"I think after a while I was trying too hard for knockouts, confessed the Puerto Rican-born Bracero after getting the monkey off his back – and it should be noted that in this instance, he got no special favors from the referee. He earned his maiden knockout.

Bracero floored Betancourt with a right in the first, and put him down again with a left just before the bell ended the second. Then in the fourth he dropped Betancourt with a left hook that left his foe on wobbly legs even when he did get up. Bracero was teeing off, chasing Betancourt across the ring with a barrage of punches, and ended all speculation by flattening him for the fourth time, leading Wayne Kelly to stop it at 1:10 of the round. Bracero is now 11-0 (with one kayo), Betancourt 8-5.

White Guys Who Can Fight a Little constitute a particular ethnic species in New York boxing circles, not just in Broadway Boxing parlance, and from all indications Joe Smith Jr., who brought along a substantial rooting section from Long Island, can fight more than just a little. Although his Chicago opponent Charles Wade got through the first round, early in the second Smith decked him with a crisp, short left hook. Wade made it to his feet, but when Smith jolted him with a hard left followed by a big right hand, Dock moved in to invoke clemency at 1:10 of the round. Smith remains undefeated at 6-0; Wade (who was advertised on the bout sheet as a "veteran of 7 bouts in lieu of an actual record) is now 1-7.

In a neighborhood brawl featuring a pair of Brooklyn super-middleweights, Philip Jackson-Benson responded to a throat-slashing gesture from Alexander Santana at the end of the first round by stopping the previously unbeaten Santana in three. A deft counterpuncher, Jackson-Benson (who narrowly lost to Danny Jacobs in the New York Golden Gloves three years ago) slammed Santana with a perfect one-two that set him up for the left hook that put him down. Benson then landed two more hard punches, and Earl Brown was already in the process of stopping the fight when Santana went down again. Both contestants are now 6-1.

Contender Argenis Mendez Gets It Done In NYC

Written by George Kimball
Wednesday, 28 July 2010 19:00

Willie Monroe Jr. – who is a junior, but is actually the grand-nephew of Willie (The Worm) Monroe, the exemplary Philadelphia middleweight of the 1970s – ran his record to 9-0 and also registered a rare (for him) stoppage when Californian Loren Myers (7-9-1) quit after four rounds. Monroe was dominant throughout, and was barely touched, apart from a second-round episode when he momentarily caught sight of himself in the mirror behind the bar. He was still admiring the view when Myers interrupted his reverie by slamming a punch upside his head.

In the curtain-raiser, Bronx cruiserweight Stivens Bujaj made a successful pro debut, hammering Memphis opponent Calvin Rooks (1-2-1) pretty much at will for the two rounds it lasted. The bout was stopped before the bell could ring for the third when Rooks indicated to Brown that he'd had enough.

* * *

Broadway Boxing
BB King Blues Club
New York City
July 28, 2010

LIGHTWEIGHTS: Argenis Mendez, 131 ½, San Juan de la Maguana, D.R. dec. Shamir Reyes, 136, Brooklyn, NY (8)

CRUISERWEIGHTS: Stivens Bujaj, 200. Bronx, NY TKO'd Calvin Rooks, 193. Memphis, Tenn. (2)

Joe Smith, Jr., 176, Mastic, NY TKO'd Charles Wade, 179 ½, Chicago, Ill. (2)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Phillip Jackson Benson, 165, Brooklyn, NY TKO'd Alexander Santana, 165, Brooklyn, NY (3)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Willie Monroe Jr., 158 ½, Ithaca, NY TKO;d Loren Myers, 157 ½, Fresno, Calif. (4)

JUNIOR WELTERS: Gabriel Bracero, 140, New York, NY TKO'd Raymond Betancourt, 137, Boca Raton, Fla. (4)