

Sturm Still Slugging Strong

Written by Phil Woolever

Saturday, 04 September 2010 19:00

KOLN - It was definitely Felix Sturms hometown, but there was no hometown decision about it.

Sturm, 159, took some good shots but adjusted to a bruising challenge from Giovanni Lorenzo, 158 1/4, and defended the WBA middleweight belt for the seventh time, with a widespread unanimous decision that few outside Lorenzos entourage disagreed with.

Sturm showed some rust in the early going, but shook it off after a few frames and scored well with short jabs and double lefts that scuffed up Lorenzo, who had some moments of his own but never established enough mauling momentum.

A vocal, decked-out swarm announced at 18,712 parties in the gleaming Lanxess Arena and made Sturms initial self-promotional exercise a good cause for optimism about the local boxing landscape. Dozens of locals hung out at various venues outside the main site just to be part of the scene.

Koln, Lanxess, everybody; thank you. Im content. The first fight here is the toughest, said a slightly marked-up Sturm, now 34-2-1 (14) after the bout. I had to be cautious because I had not fought in so long. I want to have fights here once or twice every year. This arena is my living room.

Sturm says he hopes to lure top US performers like Kelly Pavlik to Germany, but statements like that may put further travel doubts in many potential opponents plans. According to Sturm, many highly ranked contenders declined the opportunity before Lorenzo, 29-3 (21) stepped up.

I am ready to fight anybody, and Im ready to fight in the United States again, claimed Sturm. The question is, does anybody want to fight me?

Lorenzo did, and he stood strong in the face of consistent pressure. Many rounds were close, but Sturm did earn most of them. Even if each three minute margin only came down to a few jabs, a fair point total supported the scores of 117-111 twice and 118-111 by judges David Singh, Stanley Christodoulou and Stefano Carozzain tallies that were undesignated at post time. Referee Luis Pabon let them rock.

Team Lorenzo voiced complaints over their overall promotional treatment before and after the fight. Still the Dominican transplant working out of NYC showed up not only ready to fight, but ready to take the title if Sturm showed any slippage in his return from a 14 month layoff.

Lorenzo complained about the verdict, and said they would gather punch stat evidence and protest.

Sturm is a great champion but its a shame champs here dont leave their homes, huffed

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Lorenzo. It was a good fight but this isn't amateur boxing. I appreciate the German fans (but apparently they don't score body punches here.

Truth is that tonight in the rollicking riverside region known for an 18th century fragrance Eau de Cologne, there was not the slightest stench of injustice.

Quite the contrary. Aromas around Lanxess were the type of perfume potions that made it even harder not to gawk at some of the models in crowded Sturm Promotions and ArenaBox VIP areas. There was also Robusto sniffing pleasure from clouds around a hand-rolled Bentley stogie stand, which stood among sofa stations steaming with flowers next to a champagne oasis with ice-covered metallic bottles that looked like platinum bowling pins.

Sturm and Lorenzo each tried for a ten-pin knockdown but neither man was ever seriously wobbled during their high-stakes game of twelve-round tag. There was no real drama, but there were also no real lapses in the action. The fighters threw good punches in every round as they drove each other to a high standard that resulted in a good battle overall.

Sturm admitted the hardest part for him might have been nerves.

I was very nervous today. It was brutal, admitted Sturm. I had to stay focused. Many people called at the last minute wanting tickets. We will have 20,000 people at the next fight.

Sturm's new partnership since mid-summer with trainer Fritz Sdunek got off to a good start despite the qualms.

Felix was totally motivated for this fight, I worried he was too motivated, added Sdunek. He showed he was under pressure, but he performed very well.

Sturm didn't look as strong as he had a couple years back when dominating future titlist Sebastian Sylvester, but Sturm certainly didn't look shabby.

There was no warm-up period. Lorenzo was busier at the beginning, looping hooks behind a stiff jab and thumping in some solid body work. Sturm absorbed the torso taps and looked very buff from a weight training regime some pugilistic purists criticized as a hindrance to flexibility. Sturm showed no ill effects, and some big bangs to the belly showed no effect on him either.

Lorenzo always hung tough, but he slowed a bit by the fourth frame and from then on a constantly advancing Sturm almost always looked quicker and stronger. It was not easy by any means, but by the middle rounds it looked like Sturm had broken Lorenzo down with damaging double lefts. When Lorenzo's right eye looked tenderized, he fought back harder and Sturm had to eat strong counters while pressing the assault.

A busier, more forceful Sturm controlled most of the scoring action but Lorenzo never seemed so far behind a victory was out of reach. They traded huge gut shots in the ninth, proof of each's excellent conditioning. Lorenzo never gave up and forced some wild exchanges down the

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stretch. He outworked Sturm and reached around the champions modified peek-a-boo defense and took the final frame, but it was the ol too little.

Lorenzo was the perfect opponent for this return, reflected Sturm. I had some problems but I felt good. I wanted a KO but Im happy with the result. There are a lot of good opponents out there for me. I want a unification fight, but there are always worthy German challengers. I keep hearing about Arthur Abraham after the Super Six, or Id even be will to fight Bernard Hopkins at a fair weight.

From the looks of things leading up to and through fight night, Sturms promotional debut was a success. If corporate sponsors covered high-roller hoopla, it looks liketheres a lot of profitable potential, especially if Sturm can hook a name fish like Pavlik or Sergio Martinez.

Still, if Sturm and Arena Boxgot stuck with the kickoff tab, he might need an accountant more than a cut man. There was plentyof first class catering for the beautiful people who turned out in designer droves to party in rare air where ultra wheels and pinups ride the evening.

Knockout of the night camein leather platforms without any gloves, via Janine Habeck, German Playmate of the Year in 2005 and Miss September 06 in the USA. Combos indeed. Habeck helped picka half dozen 7 foot tall round card babes that added to glamorous ringside regalia. When youve got sponsors like Rolls Royce, Calvin Klein, luxuryresorts, and fine dining, it adds newmeaning to club fights.

Sturm says he wants to follow theKlitschkos K2 promotional model, which focuses on entertainment outside boxing as a major part of the fight card.

The Klitschkos arent German but they have becomesome of the most popular and successful athletes in German history because they have a connection with more than just typical boxing fans, observed Sturm. K2 undercards are known for being weak but everybody comes early because they know there will also be world famous music or other acts. I want people to see more than just my fight if they spend so much on a ticket.

We promised a lot and we delivered, said Sturm. Money was no motivation, it is important to be my own boss. It gives us a lot of hope for the future. I want to fight again in December. I had to get back my comfort level. Next time I should box much better.

Sturm got past more than justone legitimate challenge tonight.

A convincing win over Lorenzo was impressive enough.

The promotional scene itself took things up to another level.