

Much Ado About Nothing Much

Written by Phil Woolever

Monday, 29 November 2010 19:00

HELSINKI -The Carl Froch-Arthur Abraham fight was a chiller, not a thriller.

Frochs near shutout decision victory was nothing like the much hyped and hoped for toss-up battle anticipated by many, in fact it was not much of a battle at all. In victory, The Cobra stayed well-coiled but never sprang from the big punch basket, while King Arthur not only didnt have any clubbing clothes, his naked skills were immediately out of Finland fashion.

Except for a few dozen well lubricated UK blokes, there was basically no applause from most of the crowd at the final bell.

Hartwall Arena, built into parts of a small mountain with some of the stone remaining as a frame, emptied immediately. The fight didnt start until almost 1am, so there was relatively little time for the still party hungry crowd to get back to the central metro area for 4am last call.

4am in much smaller Helsinki appears to be much more of a party scene than Times Square after midnight. There was talk around the frosty pre-dawn grills and kiosks about boxing, but it concerned undercard fighter Robert Helenius.

The postfight press conference took place in an actual cave. A primal sport indeed.

It wasnt a good fight for the crowd or the TV, but it was right for me. I did what I had to do to win, mused Froch afterward with slight swelling around his left eye. We came here today and executed the game plan we worked on for so long. We just sat back behind the tactics tonight, the jab then the straight right hand. We let him come to me. There were a couple of times the old Carl Froch wanted to steam in and start whaling away with combinations, (but) in my corner Robert McCracken was screaming to back off which is dead right, because thats when you get hit, you walk into a shot.

One of the most acclaimed, glamorous pastimes in this popular destination is an opera company literally and figuratively near the top of the globe. A mainverse his weekend translated to something like Stop chiming you merciless bells, before you drive me mad. Round after round, Abraham had the same blank, desperatelook as the previous nights tenor, except for Abraham it wasnt acting. Abraham was a maestro who lost his voice, a slugger without a punch.

I dont understand what went wrong, said Abraham in a way that suggested frustration over ineffectiveness bothered him more than Froch had. Then again, it was Froch who caused the frustration.

Abraham looked almost completely lost in the ring from the third frame on. A couple rounds were even, but it might as well have been a unanimous shutout. Talk about a reality check.

My German is far from even passable vocabulary comprehension, but the way Abrahams trainer

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Ulli Wegner growled, it seems quite possible there will be a shake up in that camp, which would be unusual for the standard promotional/team based coaching model here.

Showtime Boxing came to this icy panorama of colorful customized snow suits and funky facial hair and established a major presence. There was extensive multi-media coverage, with prominent listing in the many international tourist guidebooks and plenty of Scandinavian TV coverage.

It is not officially an international bout involving an Englishman unless you get some drunken fool wrapped in the Union Jack disrupting the other National Anthems. This was official. Of course, when the flags are paraded by babes in fluorescent hot pink mini-shorts and fishnet stockings, what do you expect?

There were enough locals wearing paper crowns in honor of Arthur that it looked like Burger King had franchised the area and added herring and reindeer to the menu.

It really all came down to Abraham failing to even make it look like he was trying for his promised faster start than usual. This was a slower start than usual.

There was not much to choose from in the early going. Froch shuffled his hands as a prelude to right leads, Abraham followed the hand movement, then ate the follow ups. When Abraham tried to double up and initiate exchanges, Froch beat him to the punch and Abraham backed off, or lunged with hooks that missed by two feet.

Body shots to the right seemed to hurt Abraham more than anything. By the 8th it was clear he needed a knockout. It was also clear he would not get it.

In the 10th, Abraham connected with a few inconsequential gloves, but far too little too late.

Abraham looked extremely vulnerable in the 11th and let Froch push him around. Abraham went back to his corner a completely beaten fighter.

People were leaving before the final round. Prior to the verdict there was more interest and suspense about whether Froch's girlfriend might pop out of her painted on dress as she held on to his arm and filmed the scene. Half the photographers who leaned across the strands snapping away would not have noticed Froch if his head caught fire.

The Sweet Science saw the fight 120-110, scoring the first and third rounds even.

When security delayed Froch's uncredentialed Mum and entourage, you got insight as to where he inherited his grit. The verbal spat between Froch's relatives and the German guard was almost as entertaining as the fight.

A subdued Abraham appeared puffy around both eyes and seemed to grow more dejected as the press conference continued while members of the Sauerland group addressed the sad reality of their star's poor showing. At one point son Kalle Sauerland patted him affectionately and

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hugged Abrahams shoulders as if he were an emotional youngster needing to be consoled.

He deserved to win, he fought well tonight and I did not, offered Abraham, who seemed to already be soul searching for the answer to what transpired himself. I could not hit him or get control. Nothing I tried worked. There is really nothing else to say,

I will have to really think hard as to when was the last time that we've had such a one-sided defeat, even in the amateurs, reflected Wegner. I must take my hat off to Froch, and congratulations to him and his trainer. Actually, he fought the way I wanted Arthur to fight. Froch was aggressive and threw punches so he obviously listened to his coach. We must accept the defeat and learn from it. I will evaluate what happened, but of course there will be a lot of things Arthur and I have to speak about for the future.

While both sides showed class and abandoned their feud for good sportsmanship, the look on Abrahams slightly lumped profile indicated he probably got stung more at the podium than in the ring.

Despite our public disagreements maybe on a personal level, I've always respected him as a fighter thought it was a superb display of boxing skills by Froch, said Sauerland. No excuses. Tonight was Carls night. Its a tournament, so it goes on for us.

This was not the same Arthur as he showed so far in his career, said promotional patriarch Wilfred Sauerland, I expected him to go all out more. He had a couple of delays, so maybe he was too long in training. He wasn't fit (to peak) when he should have been.

At the opening bell, outside temperature read -13, or approximately 8.6 degrees Fahrenheit. Weather or not, Abraham froze.

Without being disrespectful to Abraham, because he's a very good fighter, very strong, I didn't even get out of second gear tonight, said Froch.

Before the obvious scores got announced folks in the seemingly pro-Abraham VIP area already cleared out. An hour earlier happy revelers in extravagant furs clutched Abraham souvenirs including signed miniature gloves, expensively bound glossed up biography books, and DVD collections.

As the contest dragged along, the floor became symbolically littered with programs, lanyard badges and other trinkets.

Not much earlier such keepsakes were considered must-have accessories. They joined the paper crowns on a wine spilled floor, discarded trash from a disappointing fight, relative to the plunge in Abrahams stock.

Now that's cold.