

TSS Tells You Who The Real Actor Is

Written by Ron Borges
Sunday, 28 March 2010 17:00

Like a lot of people who find themselves trapped there in unwanted circumstances, Arthur Abraham was looking for a way out of Detroit Saturday night. He found one when Andre Dirrell suddenly went from standing 6-foot-2 to 3-foot-2 without Abraham seeming to notice.

At least that's his story and he's sticking to it.

Referee Laurence Cole managed to get one thing right Saturday night, which put him ahead of his usual performance in a big matches, when he officially disqualified the previously undefeated Abraham for cold-cocking Dirrell while he was sitting defenseless on his knees after slipping to the canvas in the 11th round of their Super Six Super Middleweight tournament fight at Joe Louis Arena. Truth be told, Abraham disqualified himself by doing exactly what he wanted to do – which was find an excuse to take back to Germany with him for the first defeat of his career.

Although Abraham was coming on late in the fight, he was desperately behind after Dirrell boxed beautifully throughout the first nine rounds, dropping Abraham for the first time in his career in the fourth, slicing up his right eye by the seventh and using speed, lateral movement and timing to frustrate the former middleweight champion at almost every turn until he began to tire late in the fight.

Knowing he needed a knockout to win and not feeling one coming on, Abraham alternated between trying to pressure Dirrell and whining to Cole about phantom low blows on legitimate body punches until he finally saw his opening and exited through it. Dirrell was sliding right and left before slipping to his right along the ropes. As he did, he stepped on a corner logo that had already caused both fighters problems with their footing and his right foot went out from under him.

Suddenly he was unexpectedly on his knees against the ropes, squatting like a catcher, which was what he soon became. Dirrell looked surprised to find himself in that position since he hadn't been touched and for an instant Abraham stopped in his tracks, just as surprised to find himself looking down on a guy who was nearly a half foot taller than he was.

Then he willfully stepped forward and lashed his helpless opponent with a right hand to the chin, following through like Tiger Woods trying to drive the green, as Dirrell slumped over on his side to the floor, his body twitching for a time like he'd bitten into an electrical cord.

For one of the few times all night, Cole acted quickly. He walked over to Abraham and said, "You hit him while he was down." You can't get much past Laurence Cole. Well, actually you can, but Stevie Wonder could have made that call so Cole was on the case.

As Dirrell lay motionless for a while before writhing around a bit and then crying in his corner that he'd been knocked out, Abraham (31-1, 25 KO) insisted he was the victim of his victim.

TSS Tells You Who The Real Actor Is

Written by Ron Borges
Sunday, 28 March 2010 17:00

“He is not a boxer,” Abraham said after the fight. “He is an actor.”

Perhaps so but he wasn't the only thespian on the SHOWTIME stage that night. So, too, was Abraham, who kept insisting he didn't know Dirrell had slipped to the canvas despite the fact one second the former U.S. Olympian was towering over him and the next his head was below Abraham's waistband. For many boxers this would have been a clue that something was amiss. For Abraham it was an opportunity not to be missed – Dirrell's chin at belt level, literally and figuratively.

Boom! Down goes...well no he was already down.

“I should not be disqualified for this,” Abraham insisted. “I was not looking at his feet. I was looking at his eyes.”

If he was, he would have noticed they had suddenly sunk about three feet without him having had anything to do with it. But let Sir Arthur continue his fantasy for a moment.

“If you are a professional boxer you look for every opportunity to knock out your opponent,” Abraham said. “You do not wait for him to recover.”

Well, if he slips to his knees on a wet spot on the canvas you do, Artie. Maybe not in Germany, where his promoter, Wilfried Sauerland, controls every aspect of his shows including the officials, but in most other provinces of the world you do wait for a fallen opponent to recover if you had nothing to do with his falling.

Abraham did not and he knew it. If you watch the replays, of which there were about 50 from every conceivable angle, you can see Dirrell's foot slide out from under him as he tumbles to his knees. Then you can see Abraham hesitate for a moment as he looks down at him. Then – good night Detroit, hello Berlin.

The win, which came at 1:13 of the 11th round, was significant for Dirrell (19-1, 13 KO) because had Abraham beaten him as most expected he would have been 0-2 in the tournament and unlikely to find a way into the single-elimination semi-finals. Abraham won his first fight by knockout over Jermain Taylor and hence remains the point leader after two fights with three.

Were this not a tournament format to crown the best super middleweight in the world, Abraham would file all kind of protests, Dirrell would claim he was completely unconscious and unable to continue and some alphabet soup of an organization would order a rematch. There may yet be one but only if both reach the SHOWTIME semi-finals, a fight that would indeed be show time.

At the time of Abraham's bailout, Dirrell led 98-91 on judge Frank Garza's card and 97-92 on both Guido Cavalleri of Italy and Hanek Hongtonhkam of Thailand. He held an equally wide lead in a computerized punch count and his command of the ring was clear from the first round. The latter was not all that surprising at the start because Abraham is a notoriously slow starter, but when he found himself on the floor for the first time in his career from a counter left hand in the fourth round and bleeding seriously enough from a cut over his right eye that Cole called the

TSS Tells You Who The Real Actor Is

Written by Ron Borges
Sunday, 28 March 2010 17:00

ringside physicians to attend to it early in the ninth round it became clear young Dirrell had learned a lesson when he lost his first tournament fight by decision to England's Carl Froch.

"I think what the Froch fight did was open my eyes," Dirrell said several days before facing Abraham. "I have to come out with a better game plan and keep my focus. The Froch fight allowed me to grow."

What he grew into was a boxer possessed of a well-thought out plan of attack. He was not the Dirrell we'd seen too often in the past, who spent far too much time running and holding and far too little time setting his feet and punching. Although he moved all night and used his speed and athleticism to his advantage, Dirrell this time punched when the moment was right far more often than in the past.

This is not to claim it was a terribly pleasing fight to watch because it was not. But it was a brilliant night for Andre Dirrell, even though it did end with his lights dimmed if not totally out. Coming as it did on the heels of the stunning upset young American Andre Ward achieved over former super middleweight champion Mikkel Kessler in his first tournament fight it raised the profile of American fighters in the division. In 2 ½ months Ward will have the opportunity to continue that against power punching Allan Green.

That will be a defense of the WBA 168-pound title Ward (20-0, 13 KO) won from Kessler as well as the introduction of Green (29-1, 20 KO) to the tournament, coming on as he did as a late replacement for the too often somnambulant Jermain Taylor. Although Kessler and Abraham still remain favorites despite their defeats, Ward and Dirrell made statements in defense of their inclusion in the tournament, something that was seen as more American jingoism than earned elevation.

As for Abraham, he will return home to Germany and do what most American fighters do when they return to the States after losing in Deutschland – which is to complain that the fight was stolen from him by unscrupulous judges and a compliant referee who denied him a rightful knockdown on one slip and a KO on another. Anyone who takes the time to watch what Abraham did before throwing the fight's final punch – which was all but peeking over his shoulder like someone about to slip a couple of beers under his shirt at a local convenience store before exiting – they'd know who the real actor was at Joe Louis Arena Saturday night.

It wasn't the guy twitching on the floor. It was the guy who put him there.