PAGING SERGIO MARTINEZ AGAIN - Felix Sturm defended his WBA middleweight laurels with another strong showing as he blasted out game but tamed Ronald Hearns at Stuttgart's Porsche Arena.

Sturm, 35-2-1 (15), knocked Hearns out on his feet for a TKO at 2:30 in the 7th session of a fast paced, bruising waltz that kept the assembled swarm of approximately 7,000 happy.

Hearns was attempting to achieve the remarkable feat of capturing one of the same major alphabet titles his iconic father, Thomas "The Hit Man" Hearns had earned. It was not to be.

Hearns, now 26-2 (20), kept a long jab in front of Sturm all night but never connected enough to take a round. Meanwhile, Sturm surged stronger and stronger and eventually his own much stronger and more accurate jab set Hearns up for right hands that almost had him completely unconscious.

"He gave me a good fight," said a slightly nicked but still smiling Sturm. "He landed some good body shots but I have been doing excellent training, and it showed."

Sturm could have been smiling because of the stoppage, or he could have been thinking about the second straight successful promotion under his personal banner. Like the Formula One drivers he is seen hanging with in German tabloids, Sturm proves good in the driver's seat.

It took about a round for Sturm to establish himself. Hearns threw a lot more punches initially, but almost all were blocked by Sturm's excellent defense. Sturm piled up points behind solid double-jabs.

By the time Hearns got anything going around the fourth round, it was already too late. Hearns finally backed Sturm up for a few extended sequences of undamaging punches, and Sturm showed some marks around his right eye.

During the first minute of round six Hearns threw around twenty five jabs, all of which were picked off. Sturm threw eight, six landed square.

There was good action in the seventh as Sturm's superior firepower and technique finally

overwhelmed the challenger. Sturm forced Hearns into a corner and connected with a pair of overhand mortars that bent Hearns into a danger zone. At first it seemed like referee Raul Caiz, Jr might have waved it off too soon, but replays proved it was a perfect stop.

Besides expressed regret over tonight's result, the elder, boxing-legend Hearns looked healthy and happy.

"Ron gave his best and I'm proud of him," said Hearns. "Sturm is just a better fighter. He showed he deserves the title."

Sturm added evidence to his ongoing claim to top middleweight honors. He has repeatedly stated a hope to meet recognized US fighters like Kelly Pavlik and Paul Williams, but he should forget them because they are probably high risk low reward compared to another oft-mentioned, optimal target. The name of the middleweight game these days is Sergio Martinez.

Sturm should try to get Martinez in the ring as fast as possible after Martinez's defense against another German based boxer, Serhiy Dzinziruk.

It wouldn't be that much of a surprise around here if the slick Dzinziruk gave Martinez trouble. Right now, 32 year old Sturm shows much more technique than Dzinziruk but how long Sturm defies any discernable decline is, as with all boxers, unpredictable.

If Sturm could meet Martinez by the Fall, Sturm would be an underdog, but a very good bet. If Sturm continues to box as well as he has lately, he could unify some belts.

Right now, one of Sturm's biggest potential pitfalls could be complacency with a successful new business and family. For now Sturm seems very well balanced.

"I want to thank many people who help me," said Sturm. "My wife, my team, my friends, and of course my fans. I know I am lucky."

Sometimes you make your own luck.

You won't find Felix Sturm's name near the top of many pound for pound lists these days.

That doesn't mean it doesn't belong there.

Comment on this article

brownsugar says:

Wow.... How could a father do that to his son?,.. there's no way anybody involved with Hearns braintrust could have foreseen a win by Donald after way he lost his previous fight. Sad

circumstances indeed. Hearns stands like his dad,.. throws like his dad, but instead of inheriting his dads KO power,.. he inherited his moms brains which allowed him to earn a college degree instead. No is the time to cash out and use that degree for something better than becoming a punch drunk, used up, glory hound. It's time for Donald to dream new dreams. Sturm has been somewhat inactive but he was in fine enough form to have intertained a real challenger. How about Pirog, N'Jikam, or the winner of Dzinziruk/Martinez next?

Radam G says:

That is how the game rolls. If you don't know how to fight, the hook up or crook up is not tight. You will get your arse toasted every single time, unless the fixed-fight jive is in. Ronny H only got a shot for this belt because he was the son of Tommy H, and had people behind him who could get him a title shot. Connections will get you to the end of the rainbow to find that gold pot. The sad thing about it, is that Ronny H -- if he wants to -- will be fighting for another title someday. Opportunties will continue to come his way. This is the darkside of life and of the game. If you don't ever get a hook up, at you nobody will ever look up, unless you get the second best and that is a crook up. If you are not in the know, this hurt bitness will have you shook up. Everything about this game is getting the right book up. Those are plenty of whup-arsers on fringe of the game who will never get a shot. They don't have the above. Thus, no LUV! Holla!