

Martinez Scared By Barker, But Gets TKO11 Win..LEVIN RINGSIDE

Written by Adam Berlin
Sunday, 02 October 2011 10:25



While the main event between Argentine WBC middleweight champ Sergio “Maravilla” Martinez and contender “Dazzling” Darren Barker of England was not a “barnburner,” it was much better and certainly more competitive than most expected—at least on this side of the pond where most paid the Brit short shrift, including the oddsmakers who had him a 15-1 underdog. If you appreciate elite-level chess, this was a fight for you.

Barker made an excellent account of himself against one of the pound for pound best and the “real” middleweight champ but it was not enough. At 1:29 of round 11, a gorgeous right hook to the temple dropped him hard to the canvas. He had no chance of beating the ten-count. Scores at the time of stoppage were all in Martinez’s favor: 96-94, 99-91, 97-94. But don’t let the numbers fool you; this was a nip-and-tuck affair for most of the night.

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Martinez ups his mark to 48-2-2, 27 KOs and Barker goes to 23-1, 14 KOs.

“Maravilla” struggled for large portions of the fight against the rangier, smart, technical, confident customer in front of him. But the way he turned up the heat late in the fight (with what has been announced as a broken nose) as his younger (29) foe tired, and then to uncork such a spectacular KO, he secured his greatness.

It didn't take long into round one to see that Barker might have been one of the best boxers Martinez has ever faced. We weren't sure if he had all the other qualities to hang in there to the end or possibly pull the upset. But the kid could box; he was hitting and not getting hit. And he was no runner.

In round two Barker was stepping to him. Martinez was trying to figure him out, dropping his hands and snapping jabs that mainly fell on his gloves. Barker had previously spoken of his high boxing IQ; he wasn't lying. Some of the crowd booed but they shouldn't have. These were two high level boxers trying to decode each other—a display of sweet science.

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More cat and mouse action in the third. Sergio looked to counter, walk him into something. But this was a much more sophisticated boxer than a Paul Williams. A hard round to score, as were the others.

By round four, anyone had to be impressed with Barker. Martinez was bleeding from his nose with crimson all over his chest. Barker was winning the fight in the eyes of many sitting around me.

Round five, Barker continued to step to him without giving up his length. Martinez had both hands at his waist, looking to counter, but Barker not giving him much to work with.

In the next frame it was Barker's jab versus Martinez's reflexes. Barker wasn't taking a backwards step and blocking most of the incoming fire. Martinez found his groove near the end of the round, but still hadn't solved the Brit.

Sergio began to open up in the seventh. He went to the body a lot and was the busier of the two. But Barker was by no means out of it.

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Sergio slipped in the eighth and took his time getting up. One wondered how much his broken nose was affecting him? And while he doesn't act 36, that is his age. Martinez clearly did more than Barker this round.

The momentum was officially turning in the champ's favor and Barker had to make a stand to make at this point. Nothing on this night or in his past suggested he had the type of power to change a fight on a single punch—at least not against this man. The fight was incrementally slipping away from.

There was a clash of heads in the ninth. Martinez seemed to lobbying ref Eddie Cotton a bit. There didn't seem to be much on his punches, either. I thought he sort of stole the round, a la Ray Leonard, by just letting his hands go more than the other guy.

Martinez landed a good left in the tenth but was it a big left? But we quickly learned about Martinez had plenty of pop left. Barker was hurt with a looping right, and covered up for a while but also began to counter and even walk him back. He was hurt for a second but then possibly turned it into possum. Smart guy. Either way, big round for the champ.

In the eleventh, we learned why the handle "Maravilla" fits. He was pot-shotting well and had much more in the tank than Barker. Then came the right hook to the temple. And fast as that, it

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was over.

Andy Lee came up huge once again on HBO, got his long-awaited revenge against Brian Vera, and likely secured a title shot in 2012 in winning a clear UD by scores of 98-91 and 99-90 twice.

On March 21, 2008 Lee and Vera met for the first time and the undefeated, highly hyped Lee was stopped in the 7th. It's been an 11-fight rebuilding process since then. Vera has had his ups and downs since then but has been on the upswing lately, having decisioned Sergio Mora earlier this year. On paper this looked to be a can't miss affair.

Southpaw Lee boxed well in the first, using his right to keep Vera a range and also did a good job staying off the ropes. Vera looked as fit as ever, having had the longest training camp of his career, and wore his customary smirk whenever Lee landed.

In the second, a focused Lee boxed continued to box well. His defense and footwork looked improved from his last outing on HBO against Craig McEwan. A nifty check hook was also working for him. With a few seconds left in the round, Lee floored Vera with a straight lead left.

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Vera came out as aggressive as ever in the third, determined to make it a dogfight. Vera was getting close in the first half of the round but Lee regained control in latter part, landing a sharp lead left that stunned Vera, as well as a jolting right uppercut to Vera's jaw at the end of the round.

Lee used his legs in the following round to avoid Vera's winging blows. Vera was getting close. But Lee countered with a right hook that opened a cut on Vera's left eye. Adding insult to injury, Lee landed a good one-two at end of round and a right hook upstairs at the bell. I had Lee up four rounds, and an extra point for the knockdown, but nothing suggested that Vera would go quietly.

In the fifth, Vera once again came out with a confidence that suggested short-term memory loss. But Lee would not fully relinquish what he had attained. This was an even round, and Lee's face was showing the effects of punches and his energy was flagging a bit. Their heads clashed hard at the very end of round.

In the sixth, Lee caught him with a digging shot to the gut and crisp check hook moments later. For the first time in the fight, Andy was smiling back at Vera. But the Texan still had his moments and seemed utterly undeterred. This looked to be a battle of attrition, and Lee was showing the effects of his massive efforts.

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Lee wasn't controlling the center in the seventh as he did early on, his back showing rope burns. This was Vera's best round by far. He was fighting his fight—roughing Andy up when in close and pushing him back at all times. And also smiling at him as usual! Lee must've had flashbacks to the rough night back in March 2008 when Vera proved too much for him by the 7th.

Vera looked even stronger in the eighth. Indeed, he is much physically stronger than Lee, but he was unable to capitalize on the moment. Lee looked worn but he showed great moxie in countering Vera and doing more than enough to prevent a recurrence of their first encounter in '08. He has learned a few things since then. And one thing Lee has always demonstrated is toughness. Tonight was no different.

Andy played keep away in the penultimate round, knowing he was up on points and perhaps saving a little for the final frame. Vera, while chasing him, didn't land anything of consequence. And a good short lead left caught Vera just before the bell.

In the final heat Lee looked to pot-shot and his legs were still spry to carry him around. Vera mauled him and got inside and Lee, taking a break, obliged him. They slugged on even terms and Lee found a home for his uppercuts. Lee took that last round and was sufficiently proud of his efforts that he dropped to his knees afterwards, his arms raised high. "Maravilla" may be next for him.

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"This win was immeasurable," Lee said. "If not for tonight, I would have been haunted for the rest of my life."

[Comment on this article](#)

Radam G says:

Sergio Martinez is a good amateurish pro -- nothing less or more. Barker's barking punches affected SM a bit and exposed SM as an elite chump, who is easy for the BIG DAWGS to bump. From super middleweight down to welterweight, they would all bump dat chump off.

SM is a very talented athlete, but not in the league with the nowadays top guns of the game middle divisions of boksing. And at 36 years old, he ain't Doc Klits fightin' heavyweight fatties, lazies, tallies and sorry-arses. SM Hype is just another optical illusion of the dame. Holla!

DaveB says:

Barker was one step below the Klitschko's as far as fighting excitement. All he did was be defensive, cover up, not punch, and try to survive. It is supposed to be a fight, you know it takes two to tango. Barker wouldn't commit to anything except for the fact that he didn't want to be knocked out. Guess what? He was knocked out anyway. He should have tried to win. What the hell? I still think Mayweather and Pacquiao are smart to avoid Martinez because he would win, I think, and even though they would probably make more money for fighting him it is a convenient excuse to say he is not well known so they won't have to fight him. Would they rather get 30 mill to fight him and lose or 20 - 25 mill to fight someone they can beat. It is obvious which one they would rather do. But he is the bigger guy so they are not obligated to fight him any more than he is obligated to fight the bigger Bernard Hopkins.

mortcola says:

I agree mostly with Radam here. Martinez is a gifted athlete with the conditioning and gumption to attack dynamically - but he is sorely lacking in boxing polish. With simple, cleanly executed counters and a disciplined high guard, Barker was able to make Martinez look bad. And, Dave B, yes, Barker should have thrown more punches. But he did far more than you say he did, evidenced by a respectable punch output and connect rate. Throughout this fight I imagined Pac or Mayweather tearing Martinez up and not being touched by the quick but leaping, stiff-legged Maravilla shots, and having little trouble landing heavy on that low guard and exaggerated head movement rhythm. Remember, Williams and Pavlik had little trouble putting leather on that head, and hurting him, and those guys have real limitations. He came down several notches in my estimation, simply by how awkward he looked against a disciplined but not world-beating technical boxer.

DaveB says:

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It is hard to fight someone who is so defensive minded. When Barker engaged he found himself open to getting punched more. In my opinion I will pick Martinez over May or Pac but I would love to see either of them fight him and try to prove me wrong. It would do a lot for either ones career. I think a lot of people would actually be excited to see that fight. It would be like May or Pac fighting and beating Cotto, Margarito, Mosley, or Williams when people actually considered them good.

the Roast says:

I agree with DaveB. Barker did not try to win. This fight was a snoozer.

brownsugar says:

I thought Barker went down in pain because his laces got shoved up into the mouse on his eye... turns out it was perforated Eardrum...that explains why he was writhing around on his back... either way....Sergio had to force the fight against an opponent who wasn't ready to gamble on his ability to win.

amayseng says:

I'm not disappointed in sergios performance.

Not much u can do when a guy covers up 90% of the time
in that AA defense.

Barker was also a solid fighter for the most part.

Eventually serg started going to the body consistently
then broke him down and got him out of there with a right hook.

at 154 I think he honestly beats Floyd.

Floyd won a title at 154 5 years ago and can easily
fight there comfort wise.

But Floyd won't take this fight because he risks losing.

Sad.

My dad got hagler hears Leonard Duran

Ali Frazier and foreman among others.

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And my generation gets duckers and catch weights

and guys taking 18 month vacations.

Crap.

brownsugar says:

In a way I can relate to Sergio,... Pac has spoiled these guys with these high paying catchweight fights... Ever since Arum set up the Del La Hoya fight.. casual fans incorrectly believe Pac can be competitive against anybody. All Sergio is saying is,... you made all these other guys close to my weight class rich... Why is there a change in policy? How come you can't make Me Rich!!! You fought guys my size before...

It's because you are Sergio Martinez... but you Martinez still need to look around at the 160 and 154 pound classes... there are multitudes of opportunities closer to you're weight.

DaveB says:

@amayseng Dude you are funny. I had one helluva laugh about this generation. Wow!!!

FighterforJC says:

[QUOTE=amayseng;9794]I'm not disappointed in sergios performance.

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Crap.[/QUOTE]

Are you kidding me? "My" generation has the Holyfield-Bowe trilogy (circa late teens for me), Holyfield-Tyson (late teens-early 20's), Mosley-De La Hoya 1 (early 20's), Hopkins-Trinidad (mid 20's), Pacquiao-Morales trilogy (late 20's-early 30's), Pacquiao-De La Hoya, Cotto, Margarito (early 30's to mid 30's) and Pacquiao-Mayweather trilogy (late 50's to early 60's)