

With Apologies To George Kimball..

Written by Michael Woods

Thursday, 29 March 2012 15:57



Forgive me, my DVR is a bit backed up. I was present live for the Sergio Martinez-Matthew Macklin fight on March 17, and have been meaning to watch the taped HBO presentation of the bout. That is largely because I was curious to see how much if at all different the fight looked on the tube versus in the flesh. At the Theater, at Madison Square Garden, I thought Martinez

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clearly won, and while I wasn't overwhelmed with his showing—I would have liked a bit less movement, and a bit more throwing from the Argentine middleweight—I did note that Macklin looked solid, looked confident, and maybe fought the fight of his life, as well as he's capable of fighting, on that night.

My scorecard, quite imperfect because from press row, I was often blocked by camera-men or the ref or what have you, I had Martinez winning 7-3-1.

I was a bit surprised to learn that one judge saw the bout even, while two others had Martinez up by a four point margin at the time of the stoppage, the end of round 11. So I blocked out a bit of time yesterday, and watched the bout the way I think I watch it best, with my rewind button at the ready, my pause button ready to freeze the frame if the baby wakes up, HBO's multiple cameras catching the very best angle for most every punch, and no camera guys in my living room blocking my siteline. My man George Kimball would regularly vent to me about the inappropriateness of covering a bout off TV, and of course he had a point, as you won't catch anything that happens in the arena covering it from your couch. But as far as being able to best convey what actually went on in the ring on any given night, I think off TV, with the ten cameras, and the audible audio, and the glimpses into the corner, and the magic of the DVR...sorry George, I know my stance is sacreligious...

So, after the 11 rounds complete, I gave Macklin even less credit than I did live. I tallied a strange looking card: 6-0-5, for Martinez. That said, just about every round was tight tight tight.

I gave Sergio the first, for being a little busier; I gave Sergio the second, as Macklin threw a right to the body but didn't do much more than that, and I was happy the replay showed me a Macklin stumble came from tangled feet; I made the third even; I made the fourth even, and though I was impressed with how relaxed and confident Macklin looked, he was more neutralizing Sergio's offense than actually offering much of himself, and was again happy the replays on TV showed me that a stumble came from tangled feet; I made the fifth even, as a Macklin right and a Sergio left uppercut stood out in a tight round, a round in which CompuBox said Macklin was the busier; I gave Sergio the sixth, as he stole it with his last clean launch, and maybe because he landed jabs and Macklin didn't; I scored the seventh even, thankfully because I saw Sergio's glove hit the canvas because the fighters got tangled up again, and maybe could have given it to Sergio as a clean, hard left spoke to me; I scored the eighth even, leaning toward Sergio, who landed more, 17 to 12; I scored the ninth clearly for Sergio, because he put his punches together and Macklin was starting to lean, and reach and look more fatigued; I scored the tenth for Sergio, as he knocked Macklin's mouthpiece out, something I couldn't see clearly in the arena, because my siteline was blocked; and I of course scored the

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11th wide for Sergio, who scored two knockdowns.

So, off TV, I scored it 6-0-5, for Martinez. Judges are encouraged to get off the durned fence, pick a winner, but in my mind, too often, people basically flip a coin in their head, and pick a winner in a crazytight round. Why? I'd like to see fighters encouraged to win rounds conclusively, along the same lines as how Dana White before every UFC card tells the fighters to remove the judges from the equation, because they suck. Or something to that effect...More even rounds might make the boxers push themselves to get it through the judges' thick skulls that they won the three minutes.

It was fascinating to see Buddy McGirt give Macklin to option to continue, see him say, "We're gonna stop it" and note that a dazed Macklin didn't offer more than a half-hearted protest. Only because of the HBO camera being in the corner was I able to truly get a sense of McGirt's wisdom and decency in that corner. Props to him for that, and for motivating Macklin and helping him devise a strategy that kept him in the fight with the middleweight ace.

Now, some things I pondered right after the fight and am still today...Should Martinez have been in such a close fight with Matthew Macklin? If indeed he is the third best boxer in the world, should he not have put more space between himself and Macklin? Are people who say Martinez is No. 3 pound for pound overrating him? When the Top Rank crew cackles that Martinez isn't all he and his crew and many if not most fans say he is, and thus he has no call to demand Chavez Jr. glove up, do they have a point? Or...was Lou DiBella right, and not just being a promoter, when he talked up Macklin's bonafides? Or...has Martinez started to slip, started to show some crow's feet in his game?

I do believe Macklin, through the first eight or so rounds, was indeed on the top of his game, that he had trained as hard as he could for this bout, was as motivated as could be, and did better than anyone could've expected. So a large part of me thinks that Macklin much more so deserves the credit rather than Martinez deserving scorn or a harsh critique. But if he were to fight Martinez again, would he employ some different strategies and tactics? Because yes, the fight was close, but if the fight went the distance, and no knockdowns occurred, he would have lost...His feints, and his relaxed manner, the fact that he didn't press or chase kept the rounds close, but on my card, didn't win him a single round.

And Martinez...would he have won more rounds, or stopped Macklin earlier if this fight took place a few years ago? Maybe. But the man fought smart, like Einstein smart, for a 37 year old.

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Think about it; he moved, he didn't expend excess energy, he didn't trade much, he didn't risk incurring much punishment or getting cut up, he relied on his amazing stamina to get him to the late innings, when his foe, as most all of his foes, didn't have the same reserves that he did...and then he turned up the flame on the guy.

A couple other random thoughts...

If Chavez Jr. fought Macklin, who do you think would win? Isn't it possible that Macklin reverts to his more typical form, and brawls more with Chavez, and Chavez maybe potentially stops him earlier than Martinez did? Or maybe Macklin gets the better of Junior; a lot of you who are down on Junior probably like the UK man over the son of the legend, eh?

What with the spate of crappy judging we've seen the last 10 years—and mind you, I am not calling the judges' work on Martinez-Macklin crappy—I think I am a sort of OK with the WBC's open scoring system, in which the judges' scores are announced to the entire arena, or simply the two corners, after rounds four and eight. If I'm Trainer Joe, and the three judges are seeing the fight like they are tripping on acid, and they see an even fight when everyone and their brother knows Trainer Joe's guy is up handily, I think I'd like to know, so I can adjust corner strategy accordingly. Readers, what say you?

Now, I should be making my way to Kirkland-Molina and Garcia-Morales by Memorial Day. Thanks for your patience LOL.

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deepwater says:

martinez is not great.good not great. the so called real middle weight champ of the world should sell out the main garden not the 3000 seat theater, especialy fighting an english bum in green shorts on st pats day. props to sweet lou dibella for selling you the hype. its his job but dont believe the hype. props to martiez for fighting a lushed up drunk kelly pavlik and props for knocking out long tall paul. other then that he lost to the walking punching bag margocheato. imagine what hearns,hagler,nigel benn, gerald mcclellen,roy jones, trinidad would have done up against sergio.