

Ajamu wins, Holt survives in North Jersey Boxing Series

Written by Mike Indri

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Knockout Promotions packs the house at the Newark Robert Treat Hotel

The dreary and dismal downpouring of rain didn't stop the boxing fans from cramming into Newark's Robert Treat Hotel Thursday night for round two of Knockout Promotions "North Jersey Boxing Series."

Walid and Hani Darwish, relatively new to the promotional end of the boxing business, saw their one-time full fightcard whittled down to a measly four bouts. While the fight cancellations and pullouts were through no fault of their own (Pittsburgh's Jay Holland had a bad reaction following a required blood test and local fighter Eric Graham cited last minute personal reasons for being unable to fight), the Darwish brothers dodged a public relations bullet as the first three fights were true crowd pleasers and had the capacity crowd reeling from all the excitement. Even a lackluster main event couldn't deter from their exuberance.

Opening the show - in a battle on young Newark welterweights - Alex Perez began his professional career in dramatic fashion, winning via first round knockout. Perez was battling undefeated Farrakhan Cuttino (now 2-1, with 2 KO's) before sending Cuttino to his knees midway through the round. A picture-perfect left hook sent a hurt Cuttino to the canvas for good.

As this Knockout Promotions event was being televised (tape delayed) by CSI Sports, next up was the night's co-feature. Highly touted Paterson native Kendall Holt was given all he could handle by rugged Juan Carlos Escobar and managed to come away with a hard fought and well earned six round unanimous decision victory. Building up an early lead with an impressive display of power punching and boxing skills, Holt - obviously the more proficient and better skilled fighter - got caught early in round four by Escobar. Facing danger for the first time in this bout Holt resorted to several fouls (low blows), first getting a warning, then a one-point deduction from referee David Fields. Escobar fought the only way he knows how - by coming forward and never taking a step back. A true Mexican fighter, Escobar fell to 12-8-2 (6 KO's), yet left the ring as a true winner. Holt, now 16-1, looks ahead to a future nationally televised feature bout on the Showtime network's ShowBox series against former Olympian, the undefeated David Diaz (25-0).

Another highly entertaining bout followed as Yamin Mohammed, fighting out of Ohio, knocked out Terrance Thomas (now 2-3) at the bell, ending round three. The gutsy Mohammed, knocked down in round one, stood toe-to-toe with Thomas - who wasn't as hurt as he was totally exhausted - before finally nailing Thomas, dropping him twice en route to his thrilling knockout win which improved the tough lightweight's record to 3-5-1 (3 KO's).

In the main event Camden's Prince Badi Ajamu took the vacant World Boxing Council's Continental Americas Light-heavyweight title belt in a listless twelve round match against veteran Greg Wright. Wright (21-12-2), fighting out of Detroit's Kronk gym, was satisfied with

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spending most of his time on the ropes absorbing Ajamu's punches. Never a threat, Wright didn't even win one round in the eyes of two of the three judges (120-108, 120-108 and 118-110) and appeared to exert more energy talking during the bout than actually fighting. Badi, to his credit, took control of the contest literally from the opening bell and thoroughly outworked Wright. The deserved champion, now 22-2-1 with 12 knnockouts, wants to move up in the ranks and has expressed his desire to take on the Johnsons and Tarvers of the light-heavyweight division.

The large crowd on this rain-soaked night proved that there is a market for boxing in North Jersey. The Darwish brothers and their Knockout Promotions have steadily improved with each event they have put on and have stated their commitment to put on quality, "big-time" quality, boxing shows.

Knockout Promotions next outing in their "North Jersey Boxing Series" is scheduled for Thursday January 14th, 2005. For more information call Knockout Promotions at (973) 273-9898 or e-mail knockoutz@aol.com