The main event on HBO's Saturday night boxing feature was extremely important as far as determining the pecking order in the 147-lb weight class (one currently loaded with talent and good fights to make). Pitting new welterweight Robert Guerrero against mainstay contender Andre Berto provided somewhat of a crossroads fight as the winner would be set up perfectly for big money matches (with Floyd in sight) whereas the loser is destined for nothing more than contender status for at least a few fights. It's no coincidence that both pugilists were 29 years old entering the bout in what should be their respective primes.

My prediction before the fight had Berto winning a close decision due to his edge in both strength (power) and hand speed. Berto has always showed flashes of elite skills in the ring, and I've never bought into Robert Guerrero as an elite fighter (even though he's extremely likable and his story is compelling). The fact that Guerrero was fighting for just the second time at 147 lbs (having skipped the 140-lb class entirely), and that Berto was prepared to fight at 154 lbs, I figured we may be in for somewhat of a mismatch from a size-perspective.

What we saw: Guerrero v. Berto

-First and foremost, we saw that Robert Guerrero was NOT the smaller man in this fight. While he lacked some of the muscle mass that Andre Berto possessed, he looked every bit of a welterweight prizefighter.

-Andre Berto's shoulder roll defense seemed really counter-productive against a fighter like Guerrero, with Berto leaning backwards at all times. Taking a page out of Floyd Mayweather's playbook is always risky as he's such an outlier based on his raw abilities that trying to emulate his style can often yield unsatisfactory results. This strategy played with into the hands of Guerrero as Berto was swarmed early and often by a relentless Guerrero. Berto seemed unequipped to use this style since he did not once use his lead elbow to create punching space for himself. Legally using elbows/forearms to create punching space --only for yourself-- is one of the keys to this style/stance (which Adrien Broner showcased masterfully against Antonio DeMarco).

-Guerrero knocked Berto down twice in the first two rounds. The first was just old-school beatdown as Guerrero (probably illegally) held the back of Berto's head with his right and delivered several unanswered lefts to the head. That ain't boxing, it's fighting. Guerrero is a fighter.

-Guerrero showed a real lack of speed (which would haunt him in a Mayweather fight if he gets what he wants). However, his relentless pressure just bullied Berto down. I thought Guerrero's work was very nice and he showed that he was not afraid to get nasty. He turned this into a schoolyard brawl and never turned back in what proved to be an excellent strategy. I thought Guerrero would be the smaller/weaker man inside, but he controlled the distance, pace, and flow of the entire fight.

-Guerrero displayed a type of dirty boxing rarely seen in boxing anymore, just relentless

pressure. In MMA, this is what Randy Couture made famous. Ultimately, Guerrero did his best impersonation of Nick Diaz by landing countless clean, smaller shots that added up quickly.

-Berto needed to use his legs! This was a huge ring to dance in, and he needed to utilize his athleticism to stop Guerrero from simply walking him into the ropes and smothering him. The first step would have been to abandon that half-assed shoulder roll so he could be up on his toes firing off meaningful jabs to keep his opposition at bay. Beyond that, Berto needed to throw combos, which we didn't see the entire fight.

-Every round was a repeat of the round before as Guerrero would land a punch or two, and then immediately tie up and turn the fight into brawl. I'm not sure the term "Phone booth" fight applies anymore in an era where finding a functioning Phone booth is as much a challenge as getting the two best fighters in the division to fight one another, but this fight was fought almost exclusively in close quarters. (Editor Note: TSS is open to hearing replacements for the "phone booth" analogy!)

-Berto did himself no favors by throwing one punch at a time. Even though he landed massive uppercuts as the fight wore on (when Guerrero noticeably tired), his output was simply not enough. Given the discrepancy in Guerrero's aggression and volume, Berto wasn't going to win on the scorecards. He just couldn't keep the Ghost off of him, and failed to make any adjustments to change the way the fight was going (not in his favor).

-Guerrero's inability to stop Berto's uppercuts inside late in the fight was certainly alarming. However, the bigger take away from that was the fact that Guerrero can take a welterweight punch. His defense for those shots was basically to not go down from them, and in the end, it proved effective.

What we learned:

-In a pure crossroads fight, neither guy really lost ground (from a career standpoint)--which is nuts. Conversely, I'm not sure either fighter truly gained any ground either, though. Neither fighter should be considered elite or in line for a major title fight against a P4P guy like Floyd. Berto, while showing immense heart for fighting through a pair of badly swelling eyes and knockdowns, showed a real lack of experience, ability to adjust, and ability to control distance. To me, Guerrero showed true grit and determination while failing to show elite-level boxing skills.

-Berto's lack of ability to keep Guerrero off of him shows why he's not an elite fighter. This could be trainer-based as he seemed to have no training on creating space for himself or stopping Guerrero from turning it into a "phone booth" fight. What Guerrero did to get inside was hardly groundbreaking stuff. He simply willed his way in there and used some B-Hop 1-2-Hold combos. It was hardly an expert display of infighting, but rather an epic display of dictating the terms of a fight.

-Guerrero was awfully stiff in the legs, which is why I simply can't see him hanging with the elite fighters in the division. I just can't see him being able to swarm and smother Tim Bradley, let alone Floyd.

- I'd rather see Robert Guerrero vs. a very solid technical boxer like Timothy Bradley or Juan Manuel Marquez before seeing him get his chance against Floyd Mayweather. (Also, a fight with Brandon Rios makes sense and would be sick). I will say that I can totally see Floyd taking a Guerrero fight as it would be a pretty easy one for him to win coming off of a long layoff.

What we saw: Thurman v. Quintana

- At this point in his career, Carlos Quintana is the quintessential gatekeeper. He's a solid, technical southpaw who has been in very big fights and beaten some very good fighters. However, he's neither an imposing puncher nor a world-class fighter anymore. Not sure he ever has been either of those, but he certainly is not anymore. Nevertheless, Quintana represented a great test to see if Thurman can handle a game veteran who can really box.

-Thurman certainly commits to his punches. He said before the fight that he goes for knockouts, and that's evident in this first round. Thurman's body punch that yielded a first round knockdown was sweet. It had great placement (accuracy) and power, but he didn't even have his legs fully behind the shot as he was leaning forward too much. This spells raw punching power, and that's something you can't ever take away.

-Quintana getting up from that aforementioned body shot knockdown in round 1 showcases why he's such a good gatekeeper... You'll have to earn a win against him. He won't just quit. Many men in Quintana's shoes would've stayed down and collected their paycheck in stride to avoid further punishment.

-With the exception of a few range-finders, I saw no jabs thrown from Thurman through round 2. He throws haymakers, admittedly, and you gotta like that as a fan. For a guy who throws

bombs like Thurman does, I thought he did an impressive job not over-committing and leaving himself very exposed.

-Thurman is really a stalking fighter. He kept marching forward through each of the first three rounds, and actually did a solid job cutting off the ring from the more seasoned Quintana.

-Quintana couldn't offer angles, so he needed to land something hard to back Thurman up. Regardless of how effective Thurman's aggression is/was, it's enough to win a fight if your opposition doesn't land anything meaningful. Quintana offered him very little. Given a lack of true punching power, Quintana needs to out-box people and he did no such thing against Thurman.

-Thurman ended the fight with a startling, strong finish. He said he comes to finish fights, and that's just what he did. Gatekeepers exist to provide litmus tests, and Thurman passed with flying colors. On to the next one.

What we learned:

-I want more Thurman. Bring on Angulo/Kirkland/Canelo...All would be explosive matchups despite Canelo probably not being interested (can't really blame him either with big money fights on the table and Thurman's aggression/power blend). Perhaps Thurman can lure Erislandy Lara into an exciting fight for a change?

-Thurman showed good composure and discipline for a young fighter intentionally throwing KO blows. Combined with his power, it will take him to great lengths as a professional.

-Quintana said after he would retire; if he un-retires, he will be no more than a name moving forward for up-and-coming fighters.

Side Notes:

-Jim Lampley showed his brilliance in between fights by not even stumbling through the pronunciation of Guillermo Rigondeaux's upcoming opponent (Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym).

-I'm sorry, but I hate Adrien Broner. In the ring, he's outstanding, but I can't stand the guy. I understand the need to sell and promote yourself, but that guy is heading down the wrong path if you ask me. Could be a front as @Woodsy1069 and others have suggested, but I'm not so sure. If he's serious about fighting Pacquiao, I'd be thrilled to see it. But I'd much prefer never to see him outside of the ring. He's turning into a caricature of himself and it's not good.

Follow me @Blakehoc for more predictions/insights.

Comment on this article

Radam G says:

Wow! I think that there is a seriously unhealthy love affair with Money May's father-taught Philly shell/crab. Berto was in a cross-arm style, not doing nearly any "shoulder rolling." If he were Mayweather-like, it musta' been what comes outta Money May's hinny, because that Berto's imitation stunk like sh*t. Berto couldn't carry a bucket of Money May's dung.

Another thing, Berto punches very improperly. If he would've thrown the uppercuts properly and landed them with his knuckles making contact instead of the inside of his glove, he would have cut up the Cali Ghost's mug. Properly-thrown uppercut are bust-up and cut-up punches. The Cali Ghost only suffer a bit of swelling on his face from Berto's upperslaps.

Moving to double hyped-up Thurman. Dude's skills are very shallow. Hard-hitting jive means jack zero, if you cannot find the target with a bit of adroitness. Thurman is a Frankenstein-type of pugilist. Gosh! His arse is turtle slow. Angulo, Kirkland and Canelo would kayo him EARLY! Maybe in the first round. Erislandy Lara would box him silly and likely cut him up so badly that the bout would be stop. With hyped syet, up to the top, you cannot just hop. It is hell in heaven when it comes to the top dawgs up there. Holla!

deepwater says:

guerrero has the whole world in front of him. thurman better be matched very very carefully. a slick boxer can take him apart and a good puncher can punch in between his wide punches.

Carmine Cas says:

Interesting Guerrero came out and fought this way but than again I guess he was trying to nullify the speed and explosiveness of Berto. If you look at Ghost's fights below 147 he applies pressure but he boxes pretty well. If he were to fight mayweather he'd obviously bring in a different strategy if his ring IQ is has high as people claim. If you guys don't remember they were scheduled to fight over a year ago but guerrero had to pull out because of his shoulder injury. Berto needs a new trainer

brownsugar says:

Great assessment by the author..... I do have a slight quibble with a couple of issues... I don't think Guerrero should be taken for granted and classified as "not good enough"... The former 6 time champion is ready for anybody... not flashy but effective. I mean if he's not worthy to fight Pac, a fighter who will probably struggle against a natuaral junior welter (JMM) again, then who is??
And why couldn't Guerrero be competitive against the Monolithic Mayweather, who sits high upon his throne slowly erroding molecule by molecule as he keeps the boxing world in suspense. (Floyd looked like he aged 2 or 3 years in his last fight)

Like a patient artist,.. Guerrero's work just now being unveiled for study and appreciation. Who else is there?
Guerrero and Rios are essentially the same size... Bradley too. Either of those fights would work for me... (Broners not ready to move up that far).

I'd like to say Berto will be fine... one more trip to the drawing board... and a tune up or two... but I have major concerns about a boxer who comes out Frontin' like he just learned a new style of kungfu.... "YOU CAN'T FRONT IN A CHAMPIONSHIP FIGHT"... makes me wonder if Broner has lost his identity as a fighter.... you got some soul searchin to do kid.

Thurman brings something totally different than I'm accustomed to seeing these days...He's a die hard assassin like GGG or former middleweight standout Tony Ayala... I love it... this kids' going places.
His weight for his last 4 fights since 2009 have been 147.5, 149, 147.5(in february) and 152 this past saturday. Looks more like a welter than a junior middle.

SouthPaul says:

Good opinionated detail coming from Brown Suga'! I'm liking it and I'm trying not to overlook Guerrero or Floyd's age in his last bout. Thing is he was also in against a very good heavy jab handed 154lber. I also think Floyd has preserved himself well with not being overly active. I dunno, I'm stuck on Berto's silly game plan. I ain't never fought on a professional level but I doubt I'd even be goofy enough to come in with that constipated crossed arm approach.

Radam G says:

Hehehehe! SouthPaul that was nice wisecrack on Berto comparing him with Handyman in "Living Color!" Holla!

brownsugar says:

[QUOTE=SouthPaul;22751]Good opinionated detail coming from Brown Suga'! I'm liking it and I'm trying not to overlook Guerrero or Floyd's age in his last bout. Thing is he was also in against a very good heavy jab handed 154lber. I also think Floyd has preserved himself well with not being overly active. I dunno, I'm stuck on Berto's silly game plan. I ain't never fought on

a professional level but I doubt I'd even be goofy enough to come in with that constipated crossed arm approach. Berto looked like Handi Man (Damon Waynes, In Living Color).[/QUOTE]

Thanks SP ....I only say that stuff to confound the naysayers.

Bernie Campbell says:

Please keep those Bafoons Joe Watson and his sons out of the family album!

SouthPaul says:

Lmao, the name is Sam, not Joe. If i were your friend just for the prank of I'd photoshop a pic of your wife and him together.

ali says:

Thurman has a big mouth & punch but that's about it in my book. He reminds me of Randall Bailey always looking for one big shot. He has no defense and will be expose very soon trust and believe that.

Radam G says:

WOW! SCLA Ali shows super intelligence sometimes. Dude is smart and just be jacking us around playing uniformed and totally lost sometimes. I'm on to him.

YUP! Thurman is no doubt a Randall Bailey-like young fighter. And he will be totally exposed by a mid-level fighter sooner before later. And you can take that to the bank. I doubt that he ever get to da big dawgs. Holla!