Written by Joel Stern
Tuesday, 22 January 2013 16:52

Last Saturday night in the Theater of Madison Square Garden, Mikey Garcia defeated Orlando Salido via a wide 8th round technical decision and earned his first world title belt, the WBO featherweight championship. En route to the win, Garcia put Salido down to the canvas four times using masterful boxing and powerful counterpunching, but a reckless head butt from

Salido at the end of the 8th round broke Garcia's nose, leading the doctor to recommend the fight be stopped. This may have been just the break Mikey Garcia needed to ensure victory. For all of Mikey Garcia's flashes of early brilliance maybe blinded us to what was happening in the end; Mikey Garcia was tiring and Orlando Salido was doing what Orlando does, coming forward with no intention of backing down.

Mikey Garcia vs. Orlando Salido looked like a can't miss fight featuring that pleasing clash of styles: the intelligent boxer-counter puncher versus the relentless pressure fighter. The storyline was set: the young undefeated prince of one of boxing's first families seeking to claim his birthright versus the journeyman turned champion who gained the title traveling a long hard road. The fighters looked their part. Mikey Garcia has an intelligent mouse-like face, bright eyes, and slight build. One could imagine him in a blue shirt working at an Apple store. You would gladly hand over your iphone to him with absolute trust because everything about him speaks capable young man. Orlando Salido has a shaved head, rounded shoulders and expressionless glare. You could also imagine handing your iPhone over to him, in a dark parking lot.

The question entering the fight was whether Garcia would be able to punch hard enough and box well enough to keep Salido's swarming attack at bay. Mikey answered this question quickly, putting Salido down twice in the first round. Garcia used footwork to turn the charging Salido into openings, then dropped him with sudden hard left hooks in the first. Mikey continued the formula of moving Salido into his punches. Through the first six rounds all of Mikey's punches, be it the hooks that dropped Salido in the first, the right uppercut that dropped Salido in the third, the stiff jab that dropped him in the fourth, or the hard one-two that almost finished Salido in the sixth, were thrown with a precise power applied to a specific location designed to shock the brain. Salido's lights definitely flickered, but Garcia could never quite turn them out for good. Salido paid dearly for trying to get Mikey to fight on the inside. On the occasions Salido finally made it in, Mikey rewarded his efforts with a firm tight hugs that forced the ref to break the fighters.

Mikey Garcia is often compared to Juan Manuel Marquez because both are highly intelligent counter punching boxers, but I'm not quite sure the comparison works. Until Marquez's recent conversion to steam shovel operator, Marquez was a sculptor in the ring. His blazing, brilliant combination punching chipped away at rock hard men leaving the audience in awe of the beauty he revealed in the ring. Garcia is more of a stone mason. He is a master craftsman with a set of chisels. He strikes in single blows designed to cause rock hard men to crumble. He is more of a Floyd or Donaire whose timing, intelligence and power allow them to work with simple yet perfect combinations. Or at least Garcia could be mentioned with Floyd and Donaire some day. Garcia cracked Salido and may have split his foundation, but he never produced the blow that reduced Salido to rubble and the strain of Garcia's efforts began to show in round 7.

In the 7th and 8th Salido continued his march forward and began to find Garcia. Garcia's legs, which in the earlier rounds allowed him to spring back in with leveraged counter punches, now were only allowing him to run and turn. Garcia was returning with hard fire less and less. Garcia, who held Salido throughout the fight, was grabbing more frequently. Salido was seeing more of Garcia's punches that were becoming wider. Salido was blocking, ducking and weaving more. Garcia was no longer catching Salido at the end of his punches and he was standing taller as he threw them. Garcia's hands were dropping lower, a sure sign of fatigue. One could sense a hint, and maybe just of hint, of Cotto against Margarito and Pacman or Juan Manuel Lopez against Rogers Mtagwa.

The stage was set for drama until Salido dove in with his head after throwing an overhand right. Salido's head collided with Garcia's nose and broke it. There was discussion in the corner, the doctor was called in, Garcia's corner was ensured that if the fight ended it would go to the scorecards, no objections were raised and the doctor called off the fight.

Have you ever been to a monthly poker game where some guy builds a huge chip lead and just when he starts to lose a few hands his wife calls and tells him he needs to come home? That is always a bummer. But hey life cannot be avoided sometimes. As the guy is leaving with his buddy sometimes you are left to wonder if his buddy texted the wife to make that call.

What we know is that Mikey Garcia is now a featherweight champion and that he has the boxing I.Q. and the power to be a threat, if not a favorite, against any fighter in the world at or near his weight. What we don't know is what would have happened if that fight continued. Would Garcia have gotten a second wind and ended the fight as he had begun? Would he have just enough to spin, run and hold his way to the bell? Maybe Salido would have hunted and bludgeoned Garcia into submission. What I do know is that four rounds is a long time, a full third of the fight. We also don't know if Garcia can sustain his fight plan through 12 hard rounds. Can he fight through the hardest of adversity?

Someday, hopefully, we will find out. To be recognized as a participant in this sport at the transcendent level requires you to elevate yourself. Mikey Garcia won the boxing match and maybe the doctor smartly ended a fight to ensure Mikey's health and safety. That is fine and hard to argue against. But fight fans are not regular sports fans. They do not spend their money and neglect their spouses and loved ones on Saturday nights to see who wins a game. Remember that boxing fans, while often played for suckers, drive a hard bargain and demand of a fighter a steep price if they want to be mentioned with the Julio Caesar Chavez, Sr.'s, Erik

Morales' and Manny Pacquiao's of the world. The question remains if Mikey Garcia wants to pay that price, even if he already has the cash in hand.

Comment on this article

deepwater says:

We need to know if this writer has ever been in the ring before?

riverside says:

You gotta be kidding? the broken nose is a conspiracy, Salido was never knocked down it was our imagination, the miles on Salido diesel were made up, when fight was stopped Salido looked fresh as a green lettuce, Mikey was running out of breath, tumbling to his corner, so tired, he leaned and dove his nose to Salido head, hoping somehow to bail out of the fight.

Radam G says:

Mikey G can fight through adversity. Just so you know. Even with the broken nose, on Salido, Mikey was getting ready to lower the BOOM! I disgree that Salido was coming on. He was looking more and more like a drunken looneytoon.

Dude's legs were gone. Any boxer with an iota of experience saw that plain and CLEAR. And know that the KAYO was quite NEAR. Go back and sneak a peep at the fight and maybe you will catch it. And if you do, I guess that you indeed know your S**T! Holla!

Radam G says:

Hehehehehehe! Hey, Riverside, good ONE! you oughta quit. It is a slow day, the author is just talkin' syet! Hahaha! No sarcasm needed! Holla!

ali says:

Riverside hellva post fam BUT!! I think the point that the writer was trying to make was he wants to see what happens when Mickey is in a dog fight.

Radam G says:

Good stuff, Kuya Fe'Roz. And nice seeing you back. Holla!

ali says:

Fe'Roz I agree I wasn't impressed with Garcia but I am now with that performance. If he was to fight Gamboa@130 I think we will see how he responds to to be hitting alot more then he's

accustom too. I think he would really have to reach down deep to beat a fighter like Gamboa.

Radam G says:

Mikey would KAYO Gamboa in the second round, IMHO! Holla!

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bigstinkybug says:

[QUOTE=Radam G;24929]Mikey would KAYO Gamboa in the second round, IMHO! Holla![/QUOTE]

[COLOR="#FF0000">*mikey's too good... there's no other way to put it... but i wouldnt mind seeing it[/COLOR]

Radam G says:

Gamboa is a flail puncher, not a speed demon. Mikey has more speed of hands and feet than Gamboa. The games is full of optical illusions. Gamboa has too many excessive moves that are wasteful. And are apparently tricking some fans' eyeballs. Gamboa has bad balance. He is not loosey goosey and relax. He rushes. OMFG! He'd be a duck shoot for da boxing G.

Mikey is a pinpoint surgeon and a smooth operator. I will just be my critical self and call a spade a spade. Gamboa is an amateurish pro. He is pathetic. And after Mikey G finishes him

off, he will need a medic. Holla!

brownsugar says:

[QUOTE=Fe'Roz;24943]I'm not disagreeing with a word. Yuri, though dangerous and fun to watch, is full of flaws. His jerky/cocky motion reminds me of Jermaine Taylor and his tics; those wasted movements and nervous energy that had him beat before he finished a fight.

Mikey is a stone cold assassin. He will look you straight in the eye. And kill you.

Then barely smile.[/QUOTE]

Look's like the Sabatical has done you good Fe'Roz,.. lookin' better than ever... Better than Floyd Mayweather after a 2 year layoff,.. not missing a beat..

Maybe I shouldn't compare you with Floyd,.. my bad...LOL but's it's good to see you back.

I think the article is very perceptive,.. The author brings up a lot of valid points... but not in a way that speaks negatively about Garcia.
Garcia demonstrated some elite skills this past Saturday... and the kind of finess you rarely get to see.
He's definitely for real... But Salido was coming on,.. he was closing the distance and closing in on Garcia when the fight was stopped..like Jason Vorhees and Michael Meyers, Salido just kept rising from the dead.

I'm not saying that Salido was going to win,.. or that Gacia was totally gassed out, but there was a tangible momentum shift in the last 2 rounds..... maybe not that harmful to Garcia but it was noticable.For all I know Garcia could have been coasting a bit like all good fighters do... just before they marshall up enough strength to deliver the final salvo.
or maybe Salido really was testing him. Can't wait to see more of Mikey to find out.

**** Garcia vs Gamboa,...I think would been all Gamboa 2 years ago. (in my humble opinion).
Not anymore. Somebody should write a song and call it... The Seduction of Gamboa.... or call it,...."Everything that Glitters is not Gold"

It's Like Gamboa was the nerd in the junior highschool, He wanted to be with the Cool Kids... the Kids that get the girls and wears the hip clothes..... He was already an A+ student and could have gotten a Full Ride to any University in the nation on his academic skills alone. But he started hanging out with the wrong crowd,... smoking weed, ...stopped going to class and gets expelled in his senior year.

Gamboa wasted almost 2 years of his prime getting away from Arum, Seduced by watching men with duffle bags of money.....more bling than substance. The kid was lead astray on empty promises and has to watch his promoter drop from the sky with a micro-phone pressed to his

lips before he can enter the ring and fight, all for a mere 50,000.

Since when do promoters put themselves before their fighters?... and how does a guy who was the talk of the boxing world become the one who's on the outside looking in....Overnight??

It's sad to see what's become of Gamboa,.. looking as rusty and hittable as ever,.. only now with less speed and stamina...

He'd better stay far from elite competition like Garia until he can get his groove back. Gamboa looked like he had been drinking before his last fight.....

Now They're even talking about throwing him in with Bradley... a former middleweight in the amateurs...
Watch out for what you wish for.

it's a shame what they've done to Gamboa,.. 50Cent really needs to begin demonstrating that he has Gamboa's best interest at heart...I'm thinking the kid would have been better off with Arum.

brownsugar says:

Wellcome Back Fe'Roz,..

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ali says:

B-sug, FeRoz ect y'all make some great points it's starting to make me think I'm talking crazy.lol! But I will still go with Gamboa I think he will look a lot better in his next fight he just needs to shake of some of the ring rust. Let's remember Salido is far from elite it's not like Garcia just beat Nonito or Broner he beat a guy with 11 loses and someone who's been in a lot of wars.

maromero says:

He's going to have to shake off a lot more than rust when he fights Garcia