

## Peltz on Rosado-Love

Written by Russell Peltz  
Monday, 06 May 2013 14:20

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When I was growing up, Harold Johnson, the Hall-of-Fame light-heavyweight champ from Philadelphia, was my boyhood idol. So much so that when I would get my hair cut, I had it cut so short my head looked like a dirty tennis ball. Friends at Lower Merion High School would call out: "There goes Peltz with his Harold Johnson haircut."

The 1963 night the Las Vegas judges robbed Johnson of his world title on a 15-round split decision against Willie Pastrano was one of my worst. I remember storming out of my friend's house, heading home and being in a funk for weeks. When I ran into the one kid in school who thought Pastrano deserved the verdict, my only response was: "Are you Italian?" He was.

Jack McKinney, as good a boxing writer who ever walked this planet, wrote in the *Philadelphia Daily News* a less-than-flattering story about the fight. It seemed as if McKinney also thought Pastrano won. At the time, McKinney had a nightly talk show on WCAU radio and I called in, arguing with him. I never forgot what he told me: "Russell, I never said Pastrano won the fight. What I said was that because it was not one of Harold's better nights, the fight was *close enough to steal*."

*Close enough to steal!* I never forgot that line because that's how I felt Saturday night, back in Las Vegas, when middleweight Gabriel Rosado was judged a 10-round split-decision loser to unbeaten J'Leon Love. Scores were 95-94 Rosado, 95-94 Love and 97-92 for Love, a scorecard from judge Herb Santos, who should be suspended for six months and required to pass the same ophthalmological exam Nevada requires of its boxers.

Among the things I talked about in the dressing room prior to the fight was that Rosado should jump on Love from the first bell. Love had been fed a steady diet of no-hope opposition and I thought the more battle-tested Rosado should put so much pressure on Love early that Love would start asking himself: "Why am I in here?" The last thing I said before going to my seat was that if the fight goes the limit, we won't get the decision. This was Las Vegas, backyard of the "in crowd" and we were going against a fighter controlled by the "in crowd" and we were not going to get any favors. Rosado told me not to worry because, he said, it wasn't going 10 rounds.

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Then the fight started and my worst fears were realized. Far from jumping on Love, Rosado was pawing at him with a range-finder left jab, spending precious minutes without any real offense. When things got only slightly better in the next two rounds, I went over to Rosado's corner and yelled at his trainer, Billy Briscoe, imploring him to get Rosado to be more aggressive and rough Love up on the inside. Billy said that's what he was doing but Rosado was not responding. In the meantime, Love was probably thinking that this fight isn't so tough after all.

Ironic, isn't it, that nearly one year ago, when Mike Jones was fighting the same way in the same ring against Randall Bailey, Rosado had texted me during the fourth round, wondering why Jones had not stepped up the pace.

I thought Rosado won at least one of the first five rounds. Actually, I thought he won two of them, but again, this was Las Vegas. In many of those early rounds, nothing much happened and those were the rounds given to Love. Things changed late in round six when Rosado dropped Love in the waning seconds, but took his foot off the pedal in the seventh and let Love back into the fight.

Rosado took over after that, hurting Love on several occasions, but failing to close the show. Two judges, Glen Trowbridge and Dave Moretti, had it even after nine rounds. Trowbridge gave the 10<sup>th</sup> to Rosado; Moretti gave it to Love, another strange call. That was the deciding factor since judge Herb Santos was in another solar system.

I had it 95-94 Rosado. People say there were a lot of close rounds. So what? Professional judges are paid to decipher who wins close rounds. If every round was one-sided, any fan in the audience could be a judge. If the Phillies beat the Mets 2-1, they get as much credit as when they win 10-1.

As usual, Rosado showed class in his post-fight interview, but he was distraught in the dressing room, surrounded by his father and two cousins who worked the corner. I sat there listening to their complaints—justified as they were—but couldn't help but think about Jack McKinney's "*close enough to steal*" line.

"What did I tell you before we left the dressing room?" I asked Rosado. "I told you we weren't

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going to get the decision.”

“I know, Russell,” he said, “but I still deserved to win.”

“You did,” I said, “but it was close enough to steal and they stole it,”

Judging professional boxing is not rocket science. Rosado landed the harder punches, scored the only knockdown of the fight and finished stronger. The rounds he won were much more dominant than the rounds Love won.

Love says he will give Rosado a rematch. Sure, and I have a bridge in Brooklyn I'd like to sell you. If boxing were a sport, that would happen. But boxing is a business, not a sport. It ceased being a sport in the 1980s when many promoters decided that forging relationships with TV executives who liked a particular fighter of theirs was more important than pleasing fans with competitive matches. That's why you often see televised fights in 10,000-seat arenas where 9,000 fans show up disguised as empty seats (An old line, but an appropriate one).

My fighter, Mike Jones, was judged the winner over Jesus Soto-Karass nearly three years ago in Cowboys Stadium in Texas. Moments after Jones was given an unpopular decision, I went to Soto-Karass' dressing room and asked trainer Joe Goossen for a rematch. I may be one of the few promoters on the winning side to ask the loser for a second chance. HBO liked the idea and bought the fight and Jones proved his superiority the second time around. Let's see if Love and Showtime are up for it!

In the meantime, I had decided before the fight Saturday that if Rosado won, I would wear home his black souvenir T-shirt with his picture on it.

When I woke up Sunday morning and got dressed to go to the airport, I looked at that T-shirt and proudly put it on.