

Gradovich Handles Dib, Scores TKO Win

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HBO BOXING

Evgeny Gradovich put the title he won from Billy Dib on the line in the final fight before the Pacquiao-Rios rumble in Macao. The IBF featherweight champ Gradovich, the "Mexican Russian" who fights out of Oxnard, CA, and Robert Garcia's gym, exerted pressure, coming forward on the mover Dib. The end came at 1:10 of the ninth, when the Dib corner called for a halt as their man, looking weaker and weaker in each ensuing round, had no zip, and no chance.

Grado, now 18-0, went 203-670 to 73-342 for the loser. Grado went 175-55 in power shots.

A right buzzed Dib, an Australian resident who grew up idolizing Prince Naseem Hamed, in round five. Dib hit the mat in round six, though it looked like a slip, perhaps, at first glance. Dib bounced, moved laterally, as Grado pressed forward, and looked to break him down in total. Dib seems caught in between styles, wanting to move and box smartly, but also stand in the pocket and trade some.

Roy Jones said to start the eighth that the Dib (36-3) corner should consider pulling the plug on the fighter, whose face looked lumped up. Lampley said his trainer did indeed tell Dib that he needed to turn it around, or he'd yank him. His co-trainer told him after the eighth that he looked out of it, and the trainer said he'd end it after one more big blow.

To start the round, Dib was warned for a low blow, for the second time, and once for losing his mouthpiece before that. After that, he absorbed some flurries and his corner said no mas.

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Carmine Cas says:

Dib, indeed did look caught in between two styles