

So What Have we Learned So Far?

Written by Steve Kim

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But the reaction to this performance proves that the industry is looking for its white knight in its glamour division. Even better if he can be articulate and attractive like Klitschko. But remember, he still hasn't faced a guy who can throw some leather back in his direction and he was still awfully marked up for a guy that was barely hit this past Saturday. Great fights still occur: Micky Ward and Arturo Gatti proved that this past May with their pulsating 10-round war. Ward would earn the razor thin decision, but the real winner here was boxing. And what was refreshing about this was that this was a fight made on the premise that these two would make for a good scrap.

It had nothing to do with protecting a promoters cash cow, or an HBO fighter trying to fight someone of lesser ability(ala, Roy Jones) and the most refreshing thing is, it was fought for no titles. It was made on the premise that it would be a good fight- imagine that. Too often these days, the best fights are never made for all the wrong reasons: either fighters have exclusive deals with competing networks(HBO or Showtime), politics bogging down negotiations or managements wanting to go with the least possible risks. But every once in a while, as Ward-Gatti proved, fights can break out when you put fighters who are willing to put it all on the line and spill their guts. Close decisions don't mean controversial: so did you like the consistency of Erik Morales or the harder and cleaner punching of Marco Antonio Barrera, did you like the boxing of Floyd Mayweather or the aggression of Jose Luis Castillo? Ask those two questions and you'll get an even split from boxing fans. Many have labeled these decision controversial, I choose to say that they were close. I was at both fights ringside and can truly say that each bout could have gone either way. But it shows again that when you put on competitive matches at the highest levels, close fights will occur and the usual disagreement over who actually won the fight will sometimes be just as heated as the fights themselves. But it doesn't always necessarily mean that it was a corrupted process that took place in coming up with the scores. But what the Manuel Medina- Johnny Tapia fight proved was that sometimes those with the promotional and marquee backing(like Tapia) sometimes get undeserved decision that should be looked at closely. Nobody is invincible: Remember prior to his bout with Vernon Forrest that many pundits had 'Sugar' Shane Mosley as the top rated 'pound-for-pound' boxer in the world and the equal to his predecessors with the same moniker- Ray Leonard and Ray Robinson. Well, Forrest proved that nobody is unbeatable by completely dominating Mosley over 12 shocking rounds. And my how things have changed, Mosley was over a 7 to 1 favorite coming into their first bout, now, for the rematch, he's a pick'em. He went from legend to question mark in less than seven months. But Mosley wasn't the only highly regarded fighter to get their comeuppance the past year or so, guys like Felix Trinidad, Zab Judah and Naseem Hamed, all of whom were considered among the game's elite were beaten as sizable favorites in 2001 in big fights. As goes the heavyweight division, so goes boxing: This one

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irks me since I'm not really a fan of the big guys, myself, I prefer the skill and speed of the lower weight classes, but the pay-per-view numbers of Lewis-Tyson(1.8 million buys) proves that this division is the single biggest anchor the game has. And even with the lopsided nature of this bout, it created a buzz with the general public and media afterwards. Something that rarely happens with anything associated with the sport these days. Even the rebroadcast a week later on HBO did a very good rating of around an 11, that left Time Warner executives estatic. On the flip side, Barrera-Morales II, a much better fight coming in, did around 325,000 pay-per-view buys. It may not sound like much, but it's the most ever for a featherweight bout. Prospects are really suspects until proven otherwise: Yeah, yeah, I admit, I wasn't just on the Francisco Bojado bandwagon, I was driving it. But hey, what was not to love, the kid had unbelievable skills: the power, the reflexes, the quickness, the speed and the boxing ability and he was a good looking lad who was Mexican. He seemed like a promoters dream. Except, we would all find out later that his work ethic left a lot to be desired and when career journeyman Juan Carlos Rubio had the temerity to forget that he was brought in merely as an 'opponent' and decided to punch this phenon back, well, Bojado got exposed and handed his first loss. Hold off on the trip to Canastota guys, Bojado's still got a few things to learn. It just goes to show that until we see guys in there over a course of time being tested(in and out of the ring) that we really don't know that much about them. It's those that can stand early prosperity or overcome adversity in and out of the ring that become champions.