Written by Michael Woods
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It was with morgue-odor-fresh tabloid stories of dead prostitutes in my head as a companion and I drove from NYC to AC, ready to view Saturday's Showtime/Top Rank doubleheader at Boardwalk Hall, the House That Arturo Built.

We made fine time, and after trying to show up each in a contest of Who Has The More Retarded Sense Of Direction, we managed to find the Borgata. The Boxing Writer's Association was holding its yearly mass-meeting, so that we might come up with nominations, and vote for Fighter, Fight, Manager, Good Guy, Manager and Perseverant Boxing Guy of the Year. We made it to the Borgata, an admirably un-smelly, undepressing monument to optimism, with five minutes to spare.

BWAA prez Tim Graham set up a conference room for our meeting of the minds, and outfitted it with some fine vittles. My companion and I (I don't name him because he writes for a competing outlet, and I'm a competitor who doesn't want to give the opposition one extra click, dammit!) tried to eat light, because we were planning on gorging ourselves at the White House, a famous artery destroying sub shop in AC. We basically failed, because the feedbag was not too shabby, so we nibbled as we all drummed up nominations for our yearly awards, which will be voted upon by paper ballots via the USPS (a smart change from previous years, when we voted onsite, which didn't allow members outside the tri-state area to give their take). There were no fistfights, or accusations of financial impropriety, unfortunately, so the meeting moved along with seamless precision. Improvements to the BWAA website, a debate about when to hold the awards dinner, a BWAA code of ethics and complaints about power-mad (in the minds of some members) publicists and security personnel were matters that were debated on the floor. So, there was a little bit of rancor in the air, just enough to christen this meeting a legitimate BWAA gathering. But the level of discourse never deteriorated into a Cheney-esque tone...but of course, we can hope things are spicier next year.

After the meeting, my companion and I went to the sandwich shop. I scanned sidestreets for fallen streetwalkers, but thankfully, none were to be seen. No streetwalkers, period, were actually seen, come to think of it…Although, when a comely lass smiled come-hitheringly at me later, my companion did speculate that she was perhaps a pro. What, I'm so homely only pros, and wife, will give me the lusty eye treatment!!??!

After we split a six pound sub, which cost us $14 plus (I ponied up for it, since Companion picked me up, and generously used his EZ Pass extensively), and was scarfed outside in the 46 degree chill, because all the tables were taken, we went to Boardwalk Hall.

We received our creds with no problem (I've never had a problem with credentialing, thankfully, and have always found all publicists I deal with to be fair and equitable ladies and gentlemen who strike me as being underpaid, underappreciated workaholics who deserve raises!) and moved into the arena.

There were some undercard bouts, nothing to write home, or to TSS, about, and then Clottey came to the ring to fight Margarito.

To me, Clottey was the best fighter I saw on this night. I know, Cotto and Margarito fans, blasphemy, but let me explain before you spew vicious comments at me.

For about three rounds, Clottey was focused, accurate, busy and defensively sound. He was, really, the total package. And the African drummers providing a subtle layer of percussion, which sounded like far-off thunder claps, lent a pro-Clottey vibe, and a mesmerizing, exotic aura to the building…Then Clottey hurt his left hand and the robotic (and I mean that in a good way, as in, he shows a stamina unencumbered by non-mechanical lungs) Margarito began to press on him in relentless fashion.

Someone told me that it was Clottey's wife, sitting near his corner, who demanded her husband override the pain in his hand, and finish the fight. I thought he would step up a campaign of fouls, lowblows and headbutts, as he waded into deeper waters with lead water wings, but to his credit, Clottey mostly played fair. I had Margarito, who to me started out looking quite rusty, ahead by four points at the end. But I will say this--for a spell Clottey was Da Man, and he landed the majority of the cleanest, most telling, most crowd-pleasingly obvious blows. He just didn't spread them out throughout the rounds and the fight judiciously enough. And I will also say this--I have to think Floyd Jr.'s movement (head and feet) and stamina would prove to be way too much for the Tijuana Tornado…

After holding my bladder for longer than Lohan's AA stint, I ran to the lav.

Then it was time for Quintana/Cotto. Going in, I thought Q had a chance to make life difficult for Cotto. Maybe my emotions factored in, too--maybe I thought Q was a late-bloomer who could usurp the conventional wisdom, upset Cotto, make some underdog bettors some serious Xmas scratch. No dice. He looked a tad spooked by the stakes and, quickly, Cotto's extra seven pounds-worth of punching power. I also thought Cotto had a really hard time getting his distance, and didn't solve Q's lefty stance as rapidly as one might hope. But some of my colleagues really raved about his effort, so I'll defer I guess to the exit poll's validity…also, I have an inkling that when I watch this fight on the tube, I'll see that many more of Cotto's blows landed more cleanly than it appeared at ringside. So Cotto fans, please wait until I fire up the DVR and check out Cotto's effort from the sofa zone, where I won't be distracted, before you give me the business.

All in all, an enjoyable outing. My pocket didn't get picked as I walked out of the arena. That sub didn't send me to the bathroom in urgent style, until I got home. We didn't get a ticket to or from AC. I didn't get snared by any tables or one-armed bandits, so I didn't exit AC any poorer than I had to. And best of all, I was able to convince my companion that those odors in the car were industrially produced, and not manufactured by me.