

Paul Williams Hammers Verno Phillips

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Many keyboard tappers hopped off the Paul Williams bandwagon when he tasted his first loss in February. Too tall for 147, we said. Try 154, or 160. Well, Williams has tried 160, and had success, in September. And on Saturday night at Citizens Business Bank Arena in Ontario, California, he showed he has a firm grasp of the 154 pound class, with a conclusive hammering of durable spoiler Verno Phillips.

Williams was able to do what no man had done since 1988, that is, stop Phillips early. He tore into the loser's body with a steady salvo of body blows, particularly right hooks, and Verno, a three time junior middleweight titlist, was unable to come out to start the ninth round.

Nobody in the joint, or watching on HBO, could say he didn't earn his keep. Nor can they say that anyone who hopped off the Williams 'wagon made a wise move. Long, Tall Paul is still a physical freak, with a height/reach/power/chin package that makes him on the very short list to give Floyd Mayweather Jr, problems WHEN Floyd comes back in 2009. Oh, did we mention that Williams has it going on in the cardio and the volume departments? He went 227-682; Verno was 91-396 on the night.

South Carolina's Williams (153 ½ pounds; age 27) came in with a 35-1 (26 stops) record, while Colorado's Phillips (age 39) came in at 42-11-1, with 21 KOs.

In the first, the lefty Williams used his seven inch height advantage. The two clashed heads later in the round, and Williams' right eye bore the brunt. Verno landed a couple of sneaky quick rights when Williams dropped his left hand. In the second, Verno made it crystal clear that he wouldn't be caving in to Williams' rep. He clipped him with a left hook, and then again, aiming at the cut. Verno slips and blocks well, and he has a world class chin, too, we saw. In the third, Williams continued his campaign to scramble Verno's insides. His right hooks to the body, especially, looked painful to watch, let alone absorb. The cut was open wider at the end of the third, and Williams was definitely stepping on the gas, looking to close it out right quick throughout the third.

In the fourth, Verno looked overmatched, but he hung tough. Same in the fifth; he scored with a left, too, just to show that Williams couldn't bank on a stop just yet. The cut on Williams was still leaky at this point. In the sixth, the one sided fight stayed lopsided. If the fight stayed the same, one wouldn't have faulted the ref if he started to think about halting the event. In the seventh, Verno's legs still had bounce. Mercy, he is a tough sonofagun...Both men tangled up and hit the deck at the 2:10 mark. Verno tossed haymakers intermittently, but Williams kept enough distance between them and slipped them, mostly.

In the eighth, it looked to me like Verno's legs were going. Would he make it to the end? No, it turned out. The doctor went to his corner and chatted with the fighter and his trainer.

In the TV opener, Chris Arreola rose to 25-0 with a third round KO of Travis Walker (28-1). The heavyweight, nicknamed the Nightmare, weighed in at 254 pounds on Friday, and every keyboard tapper prepared a "What was he thinking?" lead as he ate heavy leather in the first. Arreola'd sworn he'd trim down after weighing 258 ½ against Israel Garcia two months ago, and darn, we get that Thursday was Thanksgiving, but 4 ½ pounds doesn't cut it, not when a man is this close to title shot. Yup, this looked like a clear-cut case of self sabotage early on, but Arreola yanked himself out of a bad situation and came through with a stoppage in a short, entertaining outing.

Walker came out banging in round one. Arreola was wobbled with left hook/right follow midway through the first. The Californian was excessively patient, and we wondered if he wasn't in gear, or if he was just sizing up his man. Walker tossed 106 punches in the round, for the record.

Walker scored a knockdown with a straight right to start the second. Arreola, age 27, needed to snap out of the funk, quickly, or his dream would be derailed. He fired back, in fact, with a mean left hook. A combo sent down Walker, and he arose with 45 seconds to go. Arreola looked to close it out, and he notched another knockdown. Again, Walker got up. He didn't clinch, and threw bombs back. He was probably saved by the bell.

In the third, an Arreola left hook ended the 29-year-old Walker's night. He protested, but his legs were pasta soft, and the ref made the right call.

The time of the finish was 13 seconds of the third.

Arreola is the second ranked heavyweight in the IBF. We can be reasonably certain that there will be more discussions about his shape, and conditioning and how much attention he has been and should be paying attention to the scale as he gets closer to the opportunity of his lifetime.

Please check back for David Avila's ringside report.