Written by Michael Woods
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Welcome Versus. You've been a presence in the boxing world this year, but only in a decidedly mediocre fashion. Your cards have been irregular, and of spotty quality. No offense, Vs. But you've opened the eyes of TSS with the doozy feature bout you showed us on Thursday evening, the one pitting IBF cruiserweight champion Steve "USS" Cunningham and rugged Pole Tomasz Adamek blasting away at each other from the Prudential Center in Newark, NJ.

Adamek sent Cunningham, whose ripped physique doesn't translate into an abundance of punching power but does serve as an attractive vehicle for his massive heart and cajones, three times, but still the champ made a contest of it. He went down, but didn't stay down, and did enough to leave viewers uncertain as we waited for the judges to lay down a decision after 12 Fight of the Year-level rounds. Cunningham won the stat war (205-690 to 186-480) but those knockdowns did him in. The scorecards read 114-112 (Cunningham), 116-110 (Adamek) and 115-112 (Adamek), and we saw a new titlist anointed.

Don King headed up the promotion, with an assist from Main Events.

The Philadelphian "USS" Cunningham (21-1, 11 KOs entering; age 32), the IBF cruiser champ who hadn't fought in the States for almost three years, weighed 197 while the Jerseyite Pole Adamek (35-1, 24 KOs coming in ; age 32; a former light heavyweight titlist) was 198.

Earl Morton oversaw the scrap.

In the first, USS showed his gameplan: move, move, move. He jabbed to the body, while the Pole jabbed up top. The arena was hot, by the way, filled up with Adamek fans. USS's hands looked faster, and Adamek was still warming up. In the second, Adamek revved up, but USS answered back. He traded some but then got back to moving. Adamek scored a knockdown with a short right/clubbing left at the bell. That sent USS to the mat, face-first. In the third, the longer-armed USS, with a seven inch reach edge, jabbed more often early. His movement took the round, as Adamek couldn't cut off the ring on him. In the fourth, USS had the Pole hurt with a flurry. His legs were soft, and he didn't clutch to buy time. Harsh rights landed, but Adamek weathered it, and dropped USS with a right with 28 seconds to go. How do you score this round, TSS Universe? It was shaping up 10-8 for Cunningham but then he was dropped…In the fifth, Cunningham grabbed on, and backed up without throwing. But then he woke up, and worked Adamek on the ropes. In the sixth, USS jabbed to the body again. Adamek pressed forward, slowly but surely. In round seven, USS's jab and feet took the first half of the round. He landed a hellacious one-two right, which would've felled Adamek if only USS had some heavier hands. In the eighth, Adamek got more aggressive in cutting off the ring. He sent Cunningham to the mat for the third time, off a left hook/right followup. He got up, but looked weary, and angry at himself. Could he finish the round with 43 seconds left? He actually landed four clean, hard shots down the stretch, and that brought us to the ninth. USS had some energy and fire left, believe it or not. Tight round, another crowd pleaser. In the 10th, Adamek was put off by the Cunningham jab and movement and odd flurries. He wasn't busy enough to take it. One would

think his knockdowns would have him ahead by plenty, but who knows? In the 11th, USS blasted away and scored with a neat right. The Pole looked beat, until the 1:25 mark, when he landed a long lead right. He got clipped with a right coming in, but finished strong, doing enough to win on the TSS card. In the 12th, USS smacked the Pole with a right to start the round. I want it! he told the judges, even if I've been down three times. He came forward, and backed the Pole up, and whacked him with an egregious right. He scored with a left uppercut, an occasional scorer for him in Newark. USS won the round, could he win the whole deal after hitting the deck three times.

In the TV opener, Ghanian IBF bantamweight champ Joseph Agbeko (25-1 entering; 118 pounds) met 117 pound Nicaraguan William Gonzalez (21-2 coming in; No. 1 contender). Gonzalez, the lefty, didn't show much of a jab. He did some good body work, while Agbeko tried to land a lead right. He ate a low shot, and took a 30 second breather in the first. In the second, they both banged. Gonzo landed smartly, and then ate some just as nasty. A cut from a butt, on the bridge of the nose, showed on Gonzo but that didn't deter his effort. In the third, the power shot fest continued. Neither man chose to raise their guard in the fourth. Another butt caused another slice on Gonzo, over the left eye. In round five, neither man paused, or needed a second wind. Agbeko forced his will on Gonzo in the sixth, and backed up the challenger. After the bell, Gonzo hit him with a low blow, with a left hand. In the seventh, Agbeko's legs had more bounce in them. By now, there were three cuts on Gonzo that needed to be quieted. In the eighth, Gonzo's legs had more life in them. In the ninth, he really picked it up. A right hook, then another, clanged hard off Agbeko's head. The Ghanian's hands looked slow in the first part of the round, but then he acted recharged. Gonzo did better at pumping the jab, and that helped his cause. In the 10th, Agbeko's hands were at his knees, and he was leaning in, offering his head on a platter. In the 11th, the round was hard to score, same as every one before. In the 12th, the African was busier to start. His lead right snapped Gonzo's head a couple times. He was the more active man in the last round. Maybe that would prove to be the difference? The judges spoke: they saw it 114-114, 116-112, 116-112 for the African, Agbeko. Gonzo accepted the decision. The stats didn't support the call: Gonzo went 299-915, Agbeko 287-815. But the slices on Gonzo spoke loudly; he got the worst of the power shots.