

James Toney Edges Oquendo For IBA Title

Written by David A. Avila

Saturday, 13 December 2008 19:00

MORONGO CASINO, CA.-An illegal punch behind the head proved to be the difference in James "Lights Out" Toney taking a split-decision over Fres Oquendo and winning the IBA heavyweight title on Saturday.

Toney won the early rounds and Oquendo took the latter rounds but the rabbit punch by the Puerto Rican heavyweight led to a point deduction in a close fight. More than 2,000 at Morongo Casino saw the Goossen-Tutor Promotion fight card.

It was a fight that started with a lot of holding, and moving by Oquendo that led to Toney opening up a lead on the score cards, but in the back stretch the Chicago-based fighter mounted a rally with jabs and combinations.

"It was an ugly fight and I won," said Toney, 40, who won his second heavyweight world title. "I was more aggressive the whole fight. He ran the entire fight."

A big overhand right by Toney staggered Oquendo in the first round, but the tall Puerto Rican fighter recovered quickly and held for most of the stanza. He had trouble connecting with his longer jab.

Toney continued using his overhand right with success. Oquendo tried to use his jab but was out-jabbed in the second round.

Oquendo landed his own overhand rights in the third but still received counter rights flush on the face from Toney. It was Oquendo's best round after three and proved to be a precursor to a different mode of attack for the Puerto Rican.

In the fourth round Toney was tripped and pushed out of the ring. He landed a left hand to the body and a big right to the head to score big.

Both Oquendo and Toney had more exchanges in the fifth than all the previous rounds. Toney landed a big left hook and Oquendo a couple of right hands.

In the sixth round a big overhand right by Toney connected solidly. Several counter lefts and rights added to his winning the round solidly. He seemed to be taking command of the fight.

The seventh round proved to be crucial in this heavyweight title fight. A point was taken away from Oquendo for hitting behind Toney's head. The Puerto Rican heavyweight had been warned a round earlier by the referee.

Oquendo used his jab to get back in the swing. Though he didn't land many punches he was more aggressive in the 10th round and proved more accurate in the last three rounds as well. A few times he landed some big punches but did not move into to take advantage.

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"I could have moved in but I wasn't sure if Toney was setting a trap," said Oquendo, who has lost fights in the past by not sticking to his boxing program. "He could be playing possum. I didn't want to get into that."

At the conclusion of 12 rounds the judges scored it a split-decision. Judges David Mendoza 115-112, Marty Denkin 114-113 for Toney. Judge Tony Crebs had it 116-111 for Oquendo.

The slow start by Oquendo and the holding in the first six rounds hurt the Chicago heavyweight. The lack of punching by Toney in the latter half stalled his momentum.

Oquendo was a last minute replacement for Tony Thompson who suffered an respiratory infection. Toney took the fight anyway knowing that it would be difficult against the more cautious Oquendo.

"If I had a choice I would not have matched Fres Oquendo with Toney," said Dan Goossen-president of Goossen-Tutor. "He's just an awkward fighter and gives everybody a tough time."

Toney said he's scheduled to fight in February and was afraid that he would be cut by Oquendo's head. On several occasions Toney wiped at his forehead after clashing with the taller Puerto Rican.

"He's a scary dude he comes in with his head and elbows," said Toney who changed tactics a bit to avoid a cut. "It's better to be safe than sorry."

Now, with the IBA world title belt, Toney is looking for unification or any of the marquee heavyweights.

"I'll fight anybody out there," Toney said. "I'm the last of a dying breed. Me and Bernard Hopkins."

Ward

Andre Ward (17-0, 12 KOs) continued his trek toward a world title fight with a dominating victory by stoppage of Mexico's Esteban Camou (23-5, 19 KOs) in a super middleweight bout that ended at 2:46 of the third round. Referee Pat Russell ended it when a left hand snapped Camou's head back and Ward followed with several pounding blows.

"He was a tough fighter but I expected it," said Ward, who won the gold medal at the 2004 Olympics. "I fought southpaw out of instinct."

Ward hurt his right knee this past summer and required surgery. He had a bandage over it during the fight but he said the knee was not a hindrance.

"My next fight is going to be in my hometown," said Ward who comes from Oakland. "2009 is going to be my year."

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Estrada

Former Olympian Shawn Estrada almost leaped out of his corner and forced referee Lou Moret to halt the fight 43 seconds into the round after two sudden knockdowns of shell shocked Shaun Spaid by right hands.

“I just wanted to jump on him. I feel confident, I’m in shape so I just let it go,” said Estrada who won by first round knockout two weeks ago in Ontario. “I want to fight two times a month.”

According to Compubox, Spaid never landed a single punch.

“If I can get them out of there, I get them out of there,” said Estrada about his seek and destroy mentality.

Chambers

Fast Eddie Chambers (33-1, 18 KOs) out-worked big Cisse Salif (23-12-2, 21 KOs) in winning an eight round heavyweight bout between upper tier boxers. Salif had his moments with rights to the body and a stiff left jab, but Chambers worked the combinations from the second round on. The Judges scored it 79-72 twice and 79-73 once for Chambers.

Malik

Philadelphia’s Malik Scott (32-0, 11 KOs) kept his perfect record with a steady jab and a busier output against Minnesota’s Raphael Butler (34-8, 24 KOs). There were no knockdowns in the fight. The judges scored it 80-72 twice and 79-73 for Scott.

Scott is a well-schooled fighter who leaves very few openings. Butler had his moments and could have won a few more rounds, but he allowed Scott to out-work him at the end of most rounds.

Lightweights

Cincinnati’s Mel Crossty (2-0) and East L.A.’s Alberto Soto (1-2) fought an action packed four round lightweight bout with both landing good blows. The judges scored it 40-36 twice and 39-37 for Crossty.