

Shannon Briggs, Coleman Nab Wins In NYC

Written by George Kimball
Thursday, 03 December 2009 18:00

NEW YORK --- Fighting for the first time in more than two years, former two-time heavyweight champion Shannon Briggs scored the 28th first-round knockout of his 55-bout pro career when referee Wayne Kelly counted out the normally resilient Marcus McGee at 2:01 of the opening stanza of a scheduled 8-rounder on Joe DeGuardia's Star Boxing card at the Manhattan Center Thursday night.

Briggs (49-5-1) put McGee (22-18) down with what was for all intents and purposes the first hard punch he threw. After missing with a jab, he followed with a hard right to the body that caved the Alabaman's side in and may well have left him with a fractured rib. McGee fell heavily to the floor, where he was counted out.

Briggs had repaired to Miami in 2007 after losing what he cited as an asthma-induced unanimous decision to Sultan Ibragimov, and, he conceded after Thursday's brief exercise, had ballooned up to 334 pounds, making the 272 1/4 he carried into the ring against McGee seem downright svelte.

Although he had not anticipated fighting again when he walked out of Boardwalk Hall a loser two years ago, Briggs said, "my friends talked me into it. They told me I'd left the game too soon without accomplishing everything I'd hoped to. They're the ones who got my off the couch and helped me lose more than sixty pounds."

The heft he packed for the McGee fight didn't appreciably differ from what he weighed against Ibragimov, but it does represent more than 70 pounds since Briggs' 1992 pro debut, and is 45 more than he weighed when he controversially outpointed George Foreman for the lineal championship in 1997.

As Briggs, who would celebrate his 38th birthday just hours later, waited in mid-ring to be interviewed by Versus after his bout, he reached out and tried to give McGee a playful hug. Only when the opponent shrank away in what appeared to be genuine terror did Briggs recognize the extent of the damage he had wrought.

"Sorry, man," he apologized.

McGee was facing his second former champ in a row, having been knocked out by Samuel Peter in Mexico back in July. The opponent, who is also 38, was scheduled to undergo x-rays afterward.

Some might have described Joe DeGuardia's business as "Hustler Boxing" even before his recent alliance with Larry Flynt, but the brand name has been formalized with the marriage of convenience that joined the bottom-feeding boxing promoter with the upscale strip-club owner. A bevy of Flynt's exotic dancers were drafted to work as round-card girls at the Manhattan Center, and an arrangement that did not always proceed flawlessly. On a couple of times a stripper

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paraded around the ring with an empty sign, leaving the audience clueless when it came to what round was coming up.

"Hey, give her a break," pleaded ring announcer Joe Antonacci on one such occasion. "She's working without her pole.

The ostensible main event saw Baltimore's Tim Coleman win a controversial split decision over "Mighty Mike" Arnaoutis to capture the USBA junior welter title. Arnaoutis (22-4-2) fights out of Queens, but is Athens-born, and a substantial segment of the audience consisted of fellow Greeks who were none too pleased by the verdict.

Arnaoutis was fighting for just the second time since being stopped by Victor Ortiz in March. Once a promising contender, he had been unbeaten prior to his back-to-back losses to Ricardo Torres and Kendall Holt in 2006-07, and had hoped to bounce back against Coleman, a 17-2-1 Baltimorean. Coleman build up a substantial lead over the early going, but Arnaoutis seemed to be coming on strong over the last half of the fight and looked to have done enough to win. He did carry the evening 116-112 on Robin Taylor's scorecard, but she was overruled by Glenn Feldman and Kevin Morgan, who both returned 115-113 cards for Coleman.

Both fighters were cut in the latter rounds. Coleman sprouted the first leak, to the side of his left eye, in the tenth, while Arnaoutis fought the last round with blood literally pumping from a much nastier gash in the same approximate area of his own face. It was one of those wounds that, had it occurred several rounds earlier, might well have impacted the outcome, or even forced a stoppage, but referee Sparkle Lee, recognizing that she was overseeing a close fight that was less than three minutes away from its conclusion, wisely opted for a hands-off policy.

Somebody's "O" had to go in the 8-round preliminary matching unbeaten welterweights, and it turned out to be the one belonging to the Philadelphian who styles himself "The New " Ray Robinson (not that anyone was likely to confuse him with the old one). Louisiana visitor Brad Solomon extended his pro mark to 9-0 as he posted a majority decision over Robinson, now 11-1. Don Trella and Steve Epstein both scored it 79-73, while Matt Ruggero had it level at 76-76.

The opening bout saw Providence cruiserweight Josh Harris improve to 5-3-1 with an upset fourth-round TKO of previously unbeaten Virginian Jaywon Woods (7-1-1). Harris, who himself had been wobbled at the end of the second, interrupted what had been a relatively close contest midway through the fourth when he caught Woods with a sweeping roundhouse left that left him flailing. When Harris wound up to deliver the same punch again it was with such ferocity that he flung himself to the floor into the process, but by then Kelly, noting Woods' helpless condition, had already waved the bout off at 1:17 of the round.

An originally scheduled 7-bout card had been reduced by two at Wednesday's weigh in. xx(Cowgirl) Shiver, the scheduled opponent for Maureen Shea in what was advertised as a WBA 'interim' title fight, was medically disqualified when the MRI portion of her pre-fight physical picked up a previously undetected brain cyst. (Shiver, 9-4, had previously fought exclusively in Tampa, where testing procedures are somewhat less rigorous.)

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Since no suitably inept replacement could be procured on short notice, Shea, 13-2 but knocked out in each of her last two fights, got the night off.

Scottish heavyweight Kevin Millarvie was also excused from performing when his opponent, Terrell Nelson, failed to turn up for the weigh-in rather than risk arrest on an outstanding domestic violence warrant. Millarvie (7-0 and listed on the program as from "Glasgow, Poland") had fought once previously in New York, winning a majority decision over Shawn McClean at the Paradise Theatre in the Bronx two years ago, a bout remarkable primarily because McClean's 1-0 represented the only winning record on the list of Millarvie's previous victims. Nelson, who was outpointed by Devin Vargas in Howard Beach in September, would have fit nicely into that tradition: He was 7-9, but winless in his last seven before going on the lam.

The walkout bout saw Bronx super-middleweight Hajro Sujak 5-0 with a unanimous decision over winless New Jerseyite Todd Erickson, now 0-2-1. Erickson was decked in the second, and had his nose bloodied in the third, but fought gamely enough. Epstein and Trella both scored it 40-35, Rugggero 39-36.

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HUSTLER BOXING MANHATTAN CENTER NEW YORK CITY Dec. 3, 2009

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: Tim Coleman 140, Baltimore, Md. dec. Mike Arnaoutis, 140, Athens, Greece (12) (Wins vacant USBA title)

HEAVYWEIGHTS: Shannon Briggs, 272 1/4, Brooklyn, NY KO'd Marcus McGee, 223 1/2, Tuscaloosa, Ala. (1)

CRUISERWEIGHTS: Josh Harris, 200, Providence, RI TKO'd Jaywon Woods, 198, Danville, Va. (4)

SUPER MIDDLES: Hajro Sujak, 168, Bronx, NY dec. Todd Eriksson, 167, Dover, N.J. (4)

WELTERWEIGHTS: Brad Solomon, 143 1/4, Lafayette, La. dec. Ray Robinson, 142 1/4, Philadelphia 8()
(ends)