

Cuban Rigondeaux Wins In New York

Written by George Kimball

Wednesday, 16 December 2009 18:00

NEW YORK -- Guillermo Rigondeaux' Miami-based connections were so anxious to showcase the Cuban featherweight before a New York audience that they all but begged their way onto Lou DiBella's final Broadway Boxing card of the year, but they may now be re-thinking the wisdom of that concept.

The 880 patrons at BB King's Blues club, on the other hand, got to witness four things no one had ever seen before: They got to watch Rigondeaux fight a fifth round, a sixth round, a seventh round, and an eighth round. Not once in his storied litany of nearly 400 amateur and professional bouts had the 29 year-old Rigondeaux ever gone beyond four.

Rigondeaux was extended the distance for the first time in four pro fights by Ghanian Lantey Addy, and while he didn't lose a single round on the scorecards of judges Steve Weisfeld and Julie Lederman (80-71 twice) and just one on the 79-72 card returned by John Signore, it wasn't exactly the big splash Team Rigondeaux was hoping for when they brought him to Times Square. As the old boxing truism holds that it takes two to make a fight.

"I'd like to see him in there with somebody who's actually trying to win the fight," said trainer Freddie Roach. "This guy went into a shell early on, and when a guy is in there determined to survive, he can usually do it."

If Addy had any designs on an upset, they were quickly disabused in the first round when the Cuban southpaw drove him to the ropes and dropped him with a perfectly executed one-two -- a hard righthanded jab, followed by an even harder straight left up the middle.

Addy, who spent the rest of the night in earnest retreat, landed only one punch of significance in eight rounds. That came in the second when a posing Rigondeaux stood before him like a statue and waved his right glove in front of the opponent and then, without so much as shifting his feet, stuck out the left. It was as if somewhere in Addy's veteran mind a synapse reminded him "He's got to drop that thing sometime," and the instant he did, Addy lashed out with a right and belted Rigondeaux in the chops.

Although the audience grew increasingly restive as the fight wore on, Rigondeaux said he never felt pressure to put on a show in his Big Apple debut. "I just listened to what Freddie told me in my corner, and took it one round at a time," he said through an interpreter.

Roach said he was pleased to see Rigondeaux finally get some rounds in, but wished it had been against an opponent who was actually throwing punches back at him.

Has Rigondeaux fought anyone of that description yet?

"Yeah. In the gym," said Roach.

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After Rigondeaux' third fight Roach had said that, given his wealth of amateur experience, the Cuban could probably already beat any of the extant 126-pound champions. Did he still think Rigondeaux was ready to fight for a title based on what he'd seen in New York?

"Well," said Roach, "maybe after one more fight."

New York heavyweight Tor Hamer is a college graduate (Penn State) and undefeated, and if he keeps fighting guys like Nasr Ali he is likely to remain that way for the foreseeable future. In fairness, Hamer (10-0) wound up facing Ali (6-5) only because his originally scheduled opponent, Domonic Jenkins, was discovered to have a fractured orbit bone at his pre-fight physical.

The fight was barely more than a minute old when Hamer maneuvered Ali into a corner, dug a left to the body, and came over the top with a right hand that sent the Brooklyn opponent straight down. Ali was so reluctant to resume the fray that he turned his back on Randy Neumann once the referee had completed his mandatory eight-count. At that point Neumann asked him point-blank "Do you want to fight?" When Ali shook his head 'No,' Neumann had no recourse but to stop the bout at 1:38 of the first.

Sunset Park (N.Y) welter Gabriel Bracero won his eighth without a loss with a unanimous decision over game Oklahoman Carl McNickels (6-3).

Bracero bled from a nasty gash above his left eye from the third round on, and tried to pick the pace up after springing the leak. Midway through the round he caught McNickels with a solid left that sent him flying into the ropes. Referee David Fields might have ruled that a knockdown, but didn't, but when Bracero chased McNickels into a neutral corner and pushed him to the floor, the referee, in what was plainly a make-up call, administered a count.

It was the only knockdown of the fight, and by the final round Bracero was in full retreat, with McNickels bombing him with right hands when he could get close enough. Julie Lederman scored it a shutout at 60-53, while Carlos Ortiz had it 59-54 and John Signorile 58-55.

Puerto Rican junior lightweight Luis del Valle (8-0) was awarded a TKO when his Mexican opponent Noe Lopez retired at the end of the second with an injured left hand. Lopez is now 4-5.

Fighting for just the second time as a pro, Bronx welterweight Christian Martinez wasted little time in disposing of his Toledo (Ohio) opponent Gabriel Morris (1-5-1). Martinez initially floored Morris with right to the body, and put him down again in a neutral corner with a left. Action had barely resumed when Martinez landed a left that, had the ropes not gotten in the way would have put Morris on a part of the stage normally reserved for the horn section. Referee David Fields stopped it after the de facto knockdown at 0:58 of the first.

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FEATHERWEIGHTS: Guillermo Rigondeaux, 125 1/2, Havana, Cuba dec. Lantey Addy 124, Accra, Ghana (8)

HEAVYWEIGHTS: Tor Hamer, 222,, New York TKO'd Nasur Ali, 205, Brooklyn, NY (1)

WELTERWEIGHTS: Gabriel Bracero, 142, Sunset Park, NY dec. Carl McNickels, 142, Gulfport, Miss. (6)

Christian Martinez, 141, Bronx, NY TKO'd Gabriel Morris, 142 , Toledo, Ohio (1)

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: Luis Orlando Del Valle, 127, Bayamon, P.R. TKO'd Noe Lopez, 127 1/2, Nogales Sonore, Mex, (2)