Written by Rick Folstad
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If there's such a thing as a mulligan in prize fighting, this is it.

A mulligan is another chance, a second swing off the first tee when your first shot slices out-of-bounds or you just plain whiff it. It doesn't count. You ignore it, pretend it didn't happen. You tee it up again.

That's why this second fight should be called a mulligan. Someone whiffed on the first try.

Maybe you saw it. That first fight was back in August between IBF bantamweight champ Abner Mares (22-0-1, 13 KOs) and former champ Joseph "King Kong" Agbeko (28-3, 22 KOs). If you didn't see the fight, don't feel bad. Neither did referee Russel Mora. And he worked it.

For those of you who missed it, here's a quick wrap-up: Agbeko went into the fight as a tenor

and came out a soprano. Mares landed so many low blows, it looked like he was trying to shine Agbeko's shoes.

Mora, the referee, apparently didn't witness the carnage, though everyone else in the Hard Rock Casino in Las Vegas did.

In the 11th round of the fight, Mares landed one of his more obvious, lethal left hooks to the land-down-under and Agbeko grabbed his groin and went down, his days of fatherhood and championships no doubt flashing before his eyes.

But instead of taking a point away from Mares for the low punch, Mora ruled it a knockdown and counted over Agbeko, making it a two-point round in Mares' favor. He went on to win the fight by a majority decision.

So they're going to try it again on Dec. 3 at the Honda Center in Anaheim, California (SHOWTIME) for the IBF and WBC title belts.

A mulligan. A second chance to get it right.

On a conference call earlier this week promoting that fight, Mares talked about the low blows and said he didn't throw them on purpose. And it's easy to believe him.

He said if Mora would have penalized him a point for hitting low, it would have changed his fight tactics. His body shots are a big part of his fight plan, but if he was warned to bring his punches up and penalized a point, he probably would have gone more to the head.

"I know there's going to be a lot of eyes open checking for any punch I throw to the body," Mares said. "I've got to be more cautious because all eyes are going to be on me, waiting for me to make a mistake. But I will definitely go to the body again because I always go to the body.

"Maybe If I'd gotten penalized in the earlier rounds, maybe had a point taken away, I would have definitely stopped going to the body and none of this would have happened. But I thought most of my punches were at the beltline. A few did go low but it was not my intention to hit him low."

Mares said he tried to correct his low blows, but Agbeko didn't help by pulling Mares' head down or blocking the low punches with his gloves.

"That (eleventh) round where I hit him low, he blocked it with his glove, but I honestly thought I was going to have a point taken away," Mares said. "I went to a neutral corner and I saw that the ref had started counting. Again, it's not my fault. You can't blame me for that."

While Agbeko was scheduled to be on the conference call, he didn't show. But his promoter, Don King, did.

“We’re trying to find Agbeko, but I’m here,” King said. He went on to say that if Agbeko fights like he did in the first fight, he will beat Mares.

“I truly don‘t count the loss that (Agbeko) had as a loss on the last fight because of Mr. Mora and his poor officiating,” King said. “However, now it’s up to Agbeko to stand up and be accounted for. Hopefully. it will be a fight that is decided by what the fighters do in the ring. This is going to be a knockdown, drag out, Pier-Six brawl type of extravaganza.”

Mares looks at this fight as a way to prove the first fight was true.

“I can’t wait to fight Joseph again and beat him again,” Mares said.

You could hear King laughing loudly in the background.

Mares ignored it.

Comment on this article

TerryIgnacio says:

I was shocked at the number of low blows in that fight. I couldn't believe that those low blows were not seen by the ref. Extremely poor officiating marred the fight, so I was glad that a rematch was ordered.

the Roast says:

As long as Russel Mora is nowhere to be seen on fight night, this will be a great fight