Written by Michael Woods
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If you read me regularly, you know I'm a guy who'd always rather see a ref stop a fight a shade early rather than late. Late can mean dead in the ring.

So it is exceedingly rare for me to talk about a quick hook, an inappropriately early stoppage. But I must say, I don't recall as stoppage that surprised me more than the one I saw in the main event on HBO on Saturday night. Canelo Alvarez had the fight in hand, I'd say, but in the fifth round, challenger Kermit Cintron was right there with him. With nine seconds to go in the round, Kermit was backed into a corner, right after he threw a double jab and right follow. Canelo answered with a jab-hook and a real solid right followup. It was a scoring blow, a solid blow, but

nothing truly earth shattering. Kermit tried to duck for cover a bit and Canelo hurled a glancing left hook to the body and a right behind the head, which clearly missed. And the ref, one Hector Afu, saw fit to halt the bout. I did a double, then a triple take. Kermit wasn't wobbled, his head wasn't in that "loose neck" mode when a fighter's head is likely to snap back in an accelerated fashion because his defenses are down. That is not to say he hadn't eaten a bunch of clean rights, and perhaps in the near future was going to be dropped and stopped. But at that moment, he was both defending himself, and in fact, and just thrown a combo.

The loser didn't protest much, if at all, it must be said, and he'd gone down in the previous round, off a sharp right. He'd eaten a bunch of those sharp rights, but this wasn't a slaughterhouse special, one of those fights where you and everyone in the arena and watching on TV, but the ref, knows the guy getting hammered has not a glimmer of hope.

My mystification grew when I noted on the Twitter that there wasn't much in the way of surprise, let alone heated dissent, regarding the ref's call. People who the week before had spent a few Tweets debating whether or not Peter Manfredo deserved more time to answer before getting the gong against Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. seemed to think Cintron was getting basted with hard blows, when in fact one, I re-state, one hard blow hit him in the final flurry.

Kermit does seem to get himself involved in fights with strange endings, and post-fights discussions for the wrong reasons. He exited the ring through the strands against Paul Williams in 2010, and it seems like a consensus emerged which accused him off leaping out of the ring; against Sergio Martinez in 2009, he avoided a count-out when he indicated he was butted and not struck, and the ref, Frank Santore, mistakenly agreed; in 2005, the undefeated Cintron raised eyebrows when he looked to his corner, willing them to stop the uneven affair against Antonio Margarito. "He was looking for intervention, looking for help, saying I can't handle this, I'm not ready for this, help me," Teddy Atlas said after, as he watched the 24-0 Cintron break down crying.

Yes, Kermit has a certain history. Some who have associated with him in the past have wondered if he wouldn't be served by some sessions with a sports psychologist, to bolster his mental stamina and confidence. But I thought he deserved the option to fight on against Canelo, even if evidence pointed to the mission being fruitless. He is 32, and the chances at the gold rings are dwindling, if not down to zero by this point, for the Puerto-Rican born hitter. So, I asked Cintron, did he think the stoppage was quick, and did he want to fight on?

"I could have kept going, it was a world title fight," he told me. "Of course I wanted to keep fighting, I was throwing bombs to try and KO him."

He characterized himself as "good physically" but "destroyed" mentally and emotionally. (By the way, I have to say I take issue with some of the flippant disregard I see tossed around on Twitter about Cintron, and other boxers. Pundits and keyboard tappers are often a bit too quick and pointed with the putdowns these days, IMO. I myself fall prey at times myself to this casual sarcasm. The temptation to score a cheap point on Twitter means sometimes we forget to respect the efforts of the boxers. End soapbox rant...)

So, will he fight again? I dare say he has looked like he wasn't fully committed at times in the last couple years.

"I'm just looking forward to seeing my kids and wife right now. Boxing can wait," Cintron said.

Comment on this article

maromero says:

im surprised they didnt stop the fight earlier, Cintron did hit Canelo with some good shots when it appeared like he was on ready to go down. All in All Kermit got lucky he didnt get knocked out cold in the end of the third round when he barely made it to his corner. He was looking at his corner like if there was a lot of fog in the ring and he couldnt distinguish his corner very well

Radam G says:

The bout should have been stopped between the second and third round. Cintron could've been severely hurt. I agree with maromero. Holla!

haroldl says:

I think the WBC open scoring may have influenced the outcome of this fight all the way around. At the end of round four, we heard Joe Martinez call out 40-35, which meant that all three official judges had Alvarez winning all four rounds and had him up by five points, including the extra point for the knockdown. Cintron, hearing he was five points down, knew hehad no chance to win in the hostile environment, so he put his head down as if to say he had enough. Panamanian Referee, Hector Afu, knowing that Cintronhad lost every round, probably figured the fight was essentially over based on those scores, so at the first opportune moment, he

jumped in to save Cintron. Just another example why open scoring is horrible, and they should do away with it once and forall.

copablack says:

I think the fight should have been stopped because Cintron did not want to fight and looked horrible! He wanted the fight stopped when he was laying on the ropes when the bell rang and was acting like he couldn't get up right away, when his trainer asked him if he was ok Cintron said "I GUESS" with a pissed off attitude! Cintron shouldn't be allowed to fight anywhere anymore he's a disgrace that was just there for a payday and anyone that doesn't agree needs to re watch that fight and his last few fights!!

brownsugar says:

copablack... I only got to see the final round so I don't have the full picture... but even though he was obviously on his last legs... he did his best to try and land a finisher between stepping to the outside from time to time in an effort to regain his composure... I'm sure Canelo knows he was surely rocked in that fight although I doubt he'll ever admit it.. Canelo was going to win fight by KO but stopping a man while he's ducking a punch seemed unnecessary to me.

gibola says:

This is always a sensitive issue - nobody wants to see a fighter hurt and the ref has a huge responsibility. I felt the Cintron stoppage was a tad premature, but I didn't have a huge problem with it. I do however feel there is a huge issue with stopping fights too early these days. One of the joys of the internet is watching a huge number of fights from the 70s and 80s and the thing you notice is that fights were usually allowed to reach a conclusion in those days. If you look at the fury Weaver v Dokes 1 caused at the time and yet today it would not be an exceptional stoppage. There is the odd exception these days where referees seem frozen (eg Vitali v Briggs) but on the whole I feel too many fights aren't allowed to reach their proper conclusion. History would be very different if Holmes had been stopped against Shavers, Snipes or Witherspoon and you bet your life he would have been in today's version of boxing. On a related note - JMM v Pac 1 is a fascinating example, three knockdowns and yet because JMM was allowed to continue we had a great fight and a great trilogy ensued. Compare that to Joe Cortez forcefully holding down James Kirklaind v Ishida in that upset a few months ago. Kirklaind had been stunned/hurt and was struggling after the first knockdown but after the third he was strong and knew immediately where he was and wanted to get up - but Cortez wouldn't let him try and make it to the bell. That stoppage pissed me off. Kirklaind could have come back and won that fight but the ref didn't give him the opportunity, he proved against Angulo that he was capable of recovering when hurt. Think for a second if the ref had stopped JMM v Pac1 the same way? Fighters shouldn't be put at risk but fights should reach their conclusion for the benefit of paying fans and the welfare of the sport itself. Therin lies the challenge I suppose, safety is the top priority but pro boxing can never be safe and if too many fights are stopped too quickly the sport will lose what it is at it's core, a fair fight to find the better man.

PS - Don't get me started on fighters/corners choosing to stop fights for cuts for tactical

reasons and ringside doctors happily going along with the charade. That's for another day!