Written by Bernard Fernandez
Wednesday, 13 June 2012 20:21

One of the more memorable quotes ever attributed to a Supreme Court Justice was authored by Potter Stewart in 1964, when the respected jurist weighed in with his thoughts on “hard-core pornography” in the Jacobellis vs. Ohio obscenity case. Unable to give a clear, concise legal interpretation on what clearly was a subjective matter, Mr. Justice Stewart settled on “I know it

when I see it," a quote appropriated by Sean Connery as James Bond in *Goldfinger* that same year. Asked what he knew about gold, suave superspy 007blithely replies, "I know it when I see it."

Potter Stewart left this world in 1985, but Connery is still among us at 81, and looking fit enough to throw down with operatives from SPECTRE and SMERSH if need be.I'm nominating the best of the movie Bonds to head up any international commission charged with teaching boxing judges how to properly score fights, a seemingly simple task that apparently is more difficult than becoming fluent at Sanskrit or unlocking the mysteries of quantum physics.

Because some guys clearly don't know it when they see it.

Exhibit 984 (the list actually might be much longer) in the thick book of unexplainable verdicts rendered at ringside was the split-decision victory awarded to Timothy Bradley Jr. in this past Saturday's pay-per-view megabout with WBO welterweight champion Manny Pacquiao at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. Despite overwhelming statistical and aesthetic evidence to the contrary, two of the three judges (that would be relative newcomer C.J. Ross and veteran Duane Ford) submitted scorecards declaring Bradley as the winner by identical margins of 115-113. To his credit, another seasoned judge, Jerry Roth, had Pacquiao ahead, 115-113, although Roth's fingerprints and DNA are all over any number of questionable decisions in high-visibility bouts, most recently the Brandon Rios-Richard Abril scrap for the vacant WBA lightweight title on April 14, in which Roth saw Rios as a 116-112 winner when most of the world saw Abril as having won easily. Thanks to a supporting 115-113 vote for Rios from judge Glenn Trowbridge, Rios left the arena with a championship that a host of know-nothing spectators and media members thought should have gone to the loser.

But to hear Ford give us his reasoning as to why he scored Pacquiao-Bradley as he did, those questioning his eyesight and judgment – that would be promoter Bob Arum, HBO's unofficial judge Harold Lederman (who had Pacquiao winning by 119-109), ESPN.com's Dan Rafael (119-109, Pacquiao) and Yahoosports.com's Kevin Iole (117-111, Pacquiao) – should go back to reading their comic books and leave the important business of scoring multimillion-dollar fights to astute professionals such as himself.

"You've got to put the ball in the basket and Manny didn't put the ball in the basket enough," Ford told Las Vegas sports writer Steve Carp. "This isn't *American Idol.* If I judge for the people, I shouldn't be a judge. I went in with a clear mind and judged each round. I don't look at the

punch stats (CompuBox had Pacquiao outlanding Bradley, 253 to 159). I saw Manny miss a lot of punches and Bradley win a lot of the exchanges.

“I’m comfortable with my performance. I thought Bradley gave Pacquiao a boxing lesson.”

That explanation apparently is satisfactory to Keith Kizer, executive director of the Nevada State Athletic Commission, who didn’t think much of Arum’s call for the scoring for Pacquiao-Bradley to be investigated by the Nevada attorney general’s office. Arum also probably wants to know who was standing on the grassy knoll outside the arena when this stinker of a decision was announced. Hey, if you thought those drawn-out negotiations to pair Pacquiao with Floyd Mayweather Jr. were difficult before, coming up with a plan that would satisfy all parties is now as impossible as a 400-pound sumo wrestler pole-vaulting over the moon.

“I hope boxing recovers, because this isn’t arguing about a close decision,” harrumphed Arum, who long ago perfected the art of displaying indignant outrage. “This is something that’s an absurdity, that’s ridiculous. Everybody’s that’s involved in boxing should be ashamed.”

I wasn’t seated in close proximity to Lederman, Rafael and Iole for this latest departure from common sense, but was 2,700 or so miles away, in the lovely village of Canastota, N.Y., for the festivities in which Thomas Hearns, Mark Johnson and 11 other boxing greats were enshrined as members of the International Boxing Hall of Fame’s 23rd annual induction class. Those seated on the dais along with the honorees – a group that included returning Hall of Famers Sugar Ray Leonard, Marvelous Marvin Hagler, Carmen Basilio, Ruben Olivares, Aaron Pryor and Carlos Ortiz – might or might not have been ashamed, but they could have expounded at length about perceived injustices they endured from judges who, to paraphrase Mr. Justice Potter, *didn’t* know it when they saw it. Those who did catch all or part of Saturday’s pay-per-view telecast from Las Vegas were of the opinion the victorious Bradley had somehow been rewarded for using his face to beat up Pacquiao’s fists.

In legend and lore, a sizable percentage of the most odious decisions are handed down in Texas, where running counter to the grain of public opinion is as admirable as, say, sheriff Gary Cooper taking on a gang of sinister gunmen in *High Noon.* There sometimes seems to be a Wild West aura to judging bouts in Texas, where up can be down or wrong can be right, and dang it if the outside world doesn’t like the outcome.

But questionable scoring has been a part of the fight game since the first time two men deigned to punch one another to settle a disagreement. “Home-town” decisions are frequently decried by visitors to local jurisdictions who leave town convinced their losses on points were based more on officials’ biases than their opponent’s skill, and you’ll find no shortage of imported fighters who insist that the only way to beat a German in Germany or a South Korean in South Korea is to knock him unconscious – and then hope that the referee doesn’t find a reason to disqualify the man left standing.

Given Las Vegas’ popularity and desirability as a site of big-time boxing events, the hopeful mantra frequently recited by fight folks plying their trade there is that the Nevada commission is somehow immune to all the standard controversies. But, as Pacquiao-Bradley again demonstrates, no state is above periodic reproach. Put it this way: As a fight fan, you might see a zebra as a white animal with black stripes, and you’re going to scream bloody murder if the person parked at ringside and being paid to register round-by-round scores onto a sheet of paper decides what he’s just seen is a black animal with white stripes.

It is, of course, easy for a member of the media to criticize a judge or a referee. The press always have the luxury of playing Monday morning quarterback, and a sports writer’s take on the outcome of a particular boxing match is no more sacrosanct than that of the individual appointed by a state commission or world governing body. Human beings are not infallible, and there is always the possibility of an error in judgment.

That said, steps should always be taken by those holding places of highest authority to ensure that the number of errors, and the magnitude of them, be kept to an absolute minimum. The 71-year-old Roth keeps getting high-visibility assignments, but to my knowledge he has never been questioned for the scorecards he submitted favoring Felix Trinidad over Oscar De La Hoya in 1999 and George Foreman over Axel Schulz in 1995, fights whose decisions were as eyebrow-raising, or nearly so, as Bradley over Pacquiao. Few would question the integrity of the Pacquiao-Bradley judges, and I certainly won’t do so, but you have to wonder: How many times can a huge majority of people see a fight one way, and one or more judges see it completely differently?

Given all their differences, maybe Pacquiao and Mayweather weren’t meant to square off in any case. If they do now, which seems unlikely, the stakes and interest from the public are sure to be at a much lower level. All of which stamps the Pacquiao-Bradley scoring as a potential $100 million gaffe.

Just a guess, but I have to believe Mr. Justice Potter would have known what to do with this fight had he been around to see it.

Comment on this article

SouthPaul says:

Duane Ford, old coot is hilarious! Putting the ball in the basket is exactly what Bradley failed to do. Homey was hitting rim shots and bouncing 'em off the back board while occasionally sinking a few here and there. Pac was missing his fair share but he hit plenty of swooshes that started in round 3. Had Bradley practically out his feet between then and thru 5. I'll take 1 hard meaning shot over several pity patters. Ray Oliveria use to throw a million and one punches but a million of them were meaningless. No hot sauce behind 'em.

I've heard Arum accuse the commission of being arrogant and he's spot on. We gotz' to dismantle these jokers, asap. Even if it gets worse before better but as long as we rid them and eventually get some sort of new blood inside the door. I want Duane Ford gone. He's a good ol' boy in more ways than one. Be gone already ya old SOB!

pj4321 says:

This guy considers himself a judge. Seriously! Giving a ridiculous analogy to basketball and generalities of Pac getting wild and missing punches! Didn't Bradley miss more? Bradley giving Pac a boxing lesson? Really, moving backwards and punching while running away is what boxing is about? How is it that Bradley's punches looking very weak compared to Manny's makes him the winner....boxing rules allow this? If so something's really wrong with how matches are scored...

Wow! I was expecting a better response from these "experienced judges". Instead they sound like Joe down the street at local bar after a few drinks.

Well at least I know now that just because you're a boxing judge doesn't mean that their OPINION isn't any better than mine....so sad for boxing...last time I order PPV...at least until Manny fights Mayweather.

No hate towards Bradley. Seems like a great guy but the look on his face and even his wife seemed surpised by the outcome...and this judge is "comfortable" with his performance....Time to retire Mr. Ford...I doubt the boxing world will ever take you serious again cause you just screwed up!

rrjr says:

does he mean he was right with his judgement that bradley won and the entire boxing fans was wrong?

rolyabella says:

I fully agree your interpretation. The only remedy I can think of, to prevent or at least show our displeasure is to stop going to Las Vegas Nev. to watch boxing. I will spend time and money to watch boxing anywhere except Las Vegas. Amen.

Radam G says:

Wow! If you guys only knew. Nobody is going to really investigate this syet, so why don't we just move on, or I will have to start dropping bombs on real hap. There are many insiders and outsiders and midjokers who know exactly what time it is. Boxing is notorious for corruption and underworld influences and crime. But this time it was heavily meddled with by political scumbags, groups and nutcases.

The game is no doubt "the threatre of the unexpected." And none of the know nothings, fakers, faders and phonies are expecting what I may drop before long. They are clueless. I'm just waiting to get more hardcore confirmation and undisputable info on the muthasuckas.

Like always, I will end up being 100 percent correct, because what at first sounds crazy to know nothings is something that they cannot comprehend or imagine. In a week, a month, a year or even a decade, the haters will say, "DARN, that is exactly what the one and only Radam G posted. How does he being knowing this syet?"

Because I FOR REAL! NOT A BULLSPITTER FULL OF SH*T! Holla!

amayseng says:

I'm confused. If this guy is judging on giving

the victory to bradley because PAC missed so many punches

and in reality and factually bradley missed entirely

many more punches then wouldn't that

in fact make PAC the vitcor?

I mean if that is what he is basing his decision on and to follow his basketball

analogy if PAC shot 60% and Bradley 38% wouldn't that

make PAC the winner ????

Something is fishy here.

deepwater says:

ford is a crook. he is on arum payroll

deepwater says:

dont be confused by the deceptive anology to another sport. effective agression,clean hard punches,ring generalsip, defense. thats the reality. he can not explain reality so he goes off on a tangent. corrupt to the core.

SouthPaul says:

This is far greater than someone on Arum's payroll. Bet Duane Ford has been at one time or another but just look at the panel of these people we call the commission. Peep out the piece on Showtime. All Access To Victor Ortiz. Look at the panel of people he had to sit up against for his boxing license hearing. That one broad doing most of the questioning and talking-- straight up smug and arrogant--- on a total power trip. I can see that by just the few minute clip. These tyrants need to be exterminated from their choke hold on the sport. Starts from the top then work down from there.

edorc says:

"you've got to put the ball in the basket, and Manny did'nt put the ball in the basket enough".
Mr. Ford, there are so many ways to score in basketball, if what you're implying is SLAMDUNKING and Manny didnt do it, but what he did instead was three point shooting, nothing but nets, so to speak. god damn sweet shooting..and he chosed the best way to score in the highest percentage, in fact, 3's plus a foul, wow! that would gave him a 4 point play!
Mr. Ford leave boxing, why not try horse racing?,you can't even qualify as a boxing Ref.

jzzy says:

Boxing is in a tailspin and cannot absorb another body blow like this. The greedy bastards who run Vegas have screwed the boxing fans over for the last time. If the top promoters are smart they would shop different venues outside Vegas for the big fights. This is a crucial crossroad for the sports longevity.

deepwater says:

for the last time, crooked judge can not answer to the facts of 1) clean punching.2)effective aggression.3)defense4)ring generalship. thats it. the 4 criteria. nothing to do with basketball. if ford wasnt in on the billion dollar rip off on the black marker then Im a unicorn. ohh yeah in another interesting note, arums boy, sheldon adelson just came up with another 10 million to throw into american elections to influence the upcoming war with syria/iran. you see isreal can not attack iran or they would be gone. the usa can attack iran for isreal and it will be ok. big

money does big things.

SouthPaul says:

Duane Ford needs to be smoked out of his hole. I know he's done some internet interviews but I'd like to see him on televsion say as a guest on Lampley's Fight Game. Make him and this gal explain themsevles front and center of the bright lights.

brownsugar says:

We don't know these people, they never show their faces... we assume they are virtuous, upstanding and holier than thou,.. We don't even know if they have a pension plan. But I bet when the right amount of money is promised, along with all the paid flights, hotel fees, and all the perks that ride with thest big events. I bet when a favor needs to be called in,... these guys deliver.

Radam G says:

That will not happen, SouthPaul. He'd be a fool to on "Lampley's Fight Game." There are some boxing journalists, who know what's going on and are ready to use ambushed journalism on the old guy. That is mean type of tabloid weak syet to me.

Since everybodee and dey momma know about a certain boxing judge's alleged membership to a racist secret society which is anti foreigner, they should let their big JOURNALISTIC CANNONS start shelling. This certain jacka$$ cheater is also a member of a far-right political party out to destroy freedom for all, and halt the big purses "that are being paid to foreigners in all American sports, businesses and technologies."

A muthapunka$$ on CNN loudly and proudly broadcasted that it should be a D@MN crime for Pacquiao to make 26 million American dollars, while the vast amount of his countrymen are suffering in deep proverty. Double FUDGE that CNN joker. He doesn't know Jacksh*t about the Philippines. Holla!