

Written by Kelsey McCarson  
Thursday, 01 August 2013 10:37

---



Jesus Soto Karass was as happy as any fighter I'd ever seen at the post fight press conference last Saturday night after he defeated former titlist Andre Berto. He told those in attendance he was ready for whatever fight Golden Boy Promotions had for him next, and we should probably believe him. Why? Because the hard puncher from Los Mochis, Mexico has now won two bouts in a row against men he was a clear underdog against. First, he outpointed Selcuck Aydin in January. Next, he put a sheer beat-down on a talented fighter in Andre Berto who absolutely had to win in order to stay in the title hunt.

## Berto/Soto Karass Ringsider Notebook

Written by Kelsey McCarson  
Thursday, 01 August 2013 10:37

---

The scores were way closer than they should have been, but Soto Karass (*pictured above, in photo courtesy of Rachel McCarson*) didn't leave it up to the three blind mice at ringside so it did not matter. (At the time of the stoppage, Cathy Leonard had it 105-103 for Berto, Hubert Minn scored it at 104-104, and Michael Mitchell had Soto Karass just two points ahead at 105-103.) In the final round, after his corner told him to box from the outside and play it safe, the angry warrior told them to take a hike. He went right after Berto because he felt he had been hit with a low blow that put him to the canvas in the previous round.

Soto Karass clocked Berto with a left hook straight to the mug, and though the brave hitter got to his feet, his starry eyes and wobbly legs told the truth of the matter to referee Jon Schorle: he was out on his feet. The fight was stopped.

Soto Karass grabbed the career defining win by TKO in the final round in impressive fashion. In fact, to these eyes it deserved the ten thousand dollar knockout bonus of night Golden Boy instead gave to Keith Thurman, but Karass didn't seem to mind too much. He laughed it off at the podium when Golden Boy V.P. Eric Gomez told him he didn't win it, likely knowing he had much bigger things in store for him after his tremendously exciting win over Berto.

And he absolutely deserves it.

### **The Demise of Andre Berto?**

Former welterweight titleholder Andre Berto came into the fight Saturday looking to get back on track after a tough loss to Robert Guerrero in his previous bout. After all, Soto Karass was generally thought of as tough but otherwise unremarkable and ultimately beatable contender.

But Soto Karass was brilliant against Berto, who simply was beat down by a more aggressively-minded offensive fighter who just plain decided he'd take the fight right to the wannabe slickster.

Andre Berto is as tremendous athlete. He's gritty, tough and fights with real determination. His

Written by Kelsey McCarson  
Thursday, 01 August 2013 10:37

---

performance, which essentially boiled down to him fighting with the full use of just one of his arms for over half the night, was admirable. The man has courage.

But his approach to the sweet science is just plain wrong. Berto wants to be a slick counterpuncher. He wants to use his athletic prowess to be hard to hit. The only problem, of course, is that Andre Berto is not hard to hit at all. In fact, his face seems a virtual magnet for almost any fist that comes near it. Ask Victor Ortiz. Ask Robert Guerrero. Ask Jesus Soto Karass.

Berto is at his best when he's aggressive. When he lays back and tries to play defense, he ends up getting pummeled to the point of needing to respond. It's true; he always does respond to his pummeling, and that's good. To that end, he's virtually incapable of being in a bad fight it seems. But by that time he's taken far too many punches without inflicting any real damage of his own. That just won't work in the long haul.

If Andre Berto wants to compete for an alphabet title again, he needs to accept what he is: a hard punching, athletic offensive fighter with grit and determination. His career might be shorter fighting this way, but its apex will be much higher and his earnings, too.

### **Let Them Fight!**

Fight fans were treated to a brutally devout display of boxing by lightweights Omar Figueroa and Nihito Arakawa on Saturday night. It was the sweetest form of savagery the sport of boxing has to offer. Neither man relented, no matter how many punches were thrown and landed.

And there were many, many punches.

After the torrid, bloody affair had ended, one giddy ringsider from Showtime (who shall not be named) peered back to us on press row with an eerie sort of bloodlust in his eyes.

Written by Kelsey McCarson  
Thursday, 01 August 2013 10:37

---

“They threw over 2100 punches combined,” he half-yelled at us.

Like our nameless ringsider, the rest of us in attendance that night were honored to be ringside to see such a display of courage and determination. Honored.

The undefeated Figueroa looked to be on his way to a quick win early. He punished Arakawa with hard hooks and uppercuts right down to the canvas in the second round. The Japanese fighter was clearly overmatched.

Or was he?

Soon, it was Arakawa standing toe-to-toe with Figueroa again right in the center of the ring. And that's where he stayed. They were whirling dervishes trapped inside of a phone booth, except that they were bloody and mean to each other. It was a fight for the ages.

Figueroa landed the harder shots at a much higher percentage on the night. He was clearly winning the fight as it progressed. But Arakawa is as tough as they come, maybe even tougher. He would not relent, would not give in. There were times when even Figueroa seemed impressed with how gritty his opponent was.

“The first round was busy as hell,” Michael Woods aptly penned here for TSS.

And so was the second. And the third, the fourth, the fifth...the entire fight was busy as hell.

It was truly an amazing spectacle to witness firsthand. When the bell finally rang to end the madness in the twelfth, the entire row of press I was seated with stood up and applauded. As you know, it is uncouth for press members to do such a thing, especially if it is for one fighter or another. But this was not that. This was applause for two gallant warriors doing what they are supposed to do: fight brilliantly and without fear.

To that end, there are always those among us who seem to have a background in medicine or something. Or maybe they're just experts at all things boxing? I don't know, but I do know they come out of the woodworks on social media when men fight each other in this way. And they always beg for the fight to be stopped. They are sometimes right, these people. I'll give them that.

But they were wrong on this night.

Look, I am all for protecting the fighters from themselves. That's a very important part of boxing that should never, ever be overlooked. But here was a case of two men giving there all in a very competitive fight. Sure, Arakawa wasn't winning on the scorecards, but he hurt Figueroa multiple times in the fight right up until the very end of the bout. This was no snuff film. The men were matched well together, and both had their chances to win.

The point of all this? Let them fight. It's what they want to do, so let them. That's what oft-maligned referee Laurence Cole did on Saturday night and it was the right call. At no time was Arakawa stumbling around the ring after the bell not knowing where to go. Was he bruised? Yes. Bloodied? Yes. Was his life in any more danger than any other prizefighter on fight night? No.

But if you believe you have the authority to tell the fighter, his corner, the referee and the ringside doctor to stop the fight because you just can't stand seeing the guts and the gore, then maybe boxing just isn't for you.

Because boxing is about hurting people.

### **Rise of the Thurman-ator**

Perhaps lost in the shuffle Saturday night in San Antonio was the standout performance by undefeated welterweight prospect Keith Thurman. He was cool, calm and confident in his battle

with the previously undefeated Diego Chaves.

Better yet, he displayed poise, power and the ability to adjust to what was in front of him on fight night, something all fighters must do if they are to become world champions. Through the first three rounds of the fracas, Chaves was taking it to Thurman with an aggressive approach that featured powerful combinations.

The Argentine had never lost before and it showed, and it was easy to see why he had knocked out 18 of his 22 opponents. But Thurman started looking to counter Chaves as he came inside, and he kept a jab in the Argentinean's face while he figured out how to do it best. Soon, it was Thurman landing the meaningful blows. Soon, it was Thurman throwing powerful combinations.

He put Chaves down in the ninth round and cold cocked him in the tenth after he bent the brave challenger over with a devastating body blow. It was brutally effective, and it made a believer out of anyone on press row who had previously doubted Thurman as a serious contender.

The kid can fight.

### **Anthony Dirrell Wins Again**

Undefeated light heavyweight Anthony Dirrell was back in action for the second time this year Saturday night. It was the fighter's second bout since breaking his leg in a 2012 motorcycle accident. The 28-year-old prospect and younger brother of former Olympian Andre Dirrell has been resilient in his short but beleaguered career.

In early 2007, Dirrell was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and forced to undergo chemotherapy. Dirrell was out of the ring for almost two years then, but returned in October of 2008 before being sidelined again by the accident.

Dirrell made quick work of former prospect Anthony Hanshaw, whose soft body couldn't have

Written by Kelsey McCarson  
Thursday, 01 August 2013 10:37

---

been helpful against the hard punching Dirrell. After Dirrell delivered the knockout blow in the third, he literally did a standing back flip in the center of the ring in celebration.

So it seems the leg is fine.

Speaking of the untelevised portion of the evening, those bouts began at 4:30 PM local time. The timing was a bit askew, though, and there was more than an hour lull between the untelevised undercard and the start of the Showtime broadcast. Of course, fans and media members who were miffed by the hour of nothingness quickly forgave the promoters when one of the finest fight cards of the year took place right before their very eyes.

How good was it? Showtime's Al Bernstein (who had the best seat in the house) said it was one of the best cards he'd ever announced.

"All six fighters did the sport proud," he said.

Follow [@KelseyMcCarson](https://twitter.com/KelseyMcCarson) on Twitter.