

Don't Blame The Referee For Lomachenko Being Bullied By Salido

Written by Frank Lotierzo

Wednesday, 05 March 2014 12:00



It's been less than a week since Orlando Salido won a 12-round split decision over Ukraine phenom Vasyl Lomachenko. And since then there's been an outcry by many fans, writers and promoter Bob Arum about how poorly referee Laurence Cole conducted his role as the enforcer of the Marquess of Queensberry rules throughout the bout.

And you know what, technically they're right.

I agree, Cole is a terrible referee and pretty much allowed Salido to maul the inexperienced Lomachenko repeatedly, but he didn't cost him the fight.

What's being missed is that it was a fight, and all combat sports participants at one time or another will try to get away with what they can outside of the rulebook in order to get an advantage over their opponent. Granted, it's not a street fight, but it's still combat. It's also one on one and there's nobody else inside the combat zone to help you out. Your trainer and manager are outside the ring and although it is their duty to look after their fighter and protect him inside and outside of the combat quarters, when all else fails, it's on the fighter.

As we saw, Orlando Salido took a lot of liberties with Vasyl Lomachenko when they met in the ring last weekend. But it's not as if people didn't know beforehand the kind of fighter Salido is, so his tactics shouldn't have come as a surprise to Arum or anyone working with Lomachenko. Also, it's not like Salido fought a *disgracefully* dirty fight; he just used rough tactics.

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Salido hit Lomachenko low and on the hips, roughed him up on the inside and even stepped on his feet. All blatant fouls. And what did Lomachenko do? Virtually nothing and was hoping that the referee would save him. How'd that work out for him? Fighting, regardless whether it's in a ring or a cage is a very tough way to make a living. If you're really good at it, you get paid really well. However, it's still comes down to one man trying to overcome another and guys who do it for a living are pretty good at it and all of them look for some type of an advantage over the other. In the case of Orlando Salido, he didn't care, he was all about whatever it took to mess up and unnerve Lomachenko in order to throw him off his game and what he wanted to do - and unfortunately for Lomachenko, he took it because he thought he was above resorting to that type of conduct in the biggest fight of his brief career.

Here's a news flash...Salido pushed the envelope because he picked up two things quickly during the fight: 1) referee Laurence Cole wasn't going to call it closely or disqualify him because that would've really looked bad, giving the title to a kid in his second pro bout because he was a little roughed up. And 2): Salido also picked up on how Lomachenko wasn't going to resort to the same tactics in order to get him to back off or stop, and once that became clear Salido had no intention of suddenly halting what was working.

So for the better part of 12 rounds Lomachenko was roughed up and never retaliated in a way to force Salido to respect him. Did it ever dawn on him that he could've kneed Salido in the groin because of the two fighters he was the least likely to be disqualified? Had Lomachenko stepped on Salido's feet or deliberately hit him low, who would've thought less of him for doing that?

I'll answer that.

Nobody.

In fact most would've seen it as being warranted and provoked by Salido. Who knows, maybe Lomachenko could've really taken the fouling to an extreme, judging by the way referee Laurence Cole was working the fight, only we'll never know because he never attempted to make Salido pay for his intentional and deliberate rough housing. He just took it and looked to the referee and his corner to bail him out, something that never happened.

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Bob Arum is crying to the media how Salido fought dirty and should've been penalized. Ask yourself this; what do you think Arum said to Lomachenko in the dressing room after the fight? Do you think he said, "Vasyl, you fought really smart and it's too bad that Salido had to resort to the street fighting tactics that he he did, we'll get a better referee next time?" If you think that's how it went you're a novice to many dimensions of the professional boxing world.

I'd be willing to bet that when there was no one around who Arum felt would carry back what he said, he tore into Lomachenko for taking it and asked what is wrong with him for allowing Salido to bully him the way he did. I bet Arum screamed, or, perhaps, should have yelled, 'Why didn't you hit the SOB in the groin when he did it to you? I can't jump in the ring and do it for you during the fight. This is professional boxing, do you think these guys who view you as being spoon fed are gonna roll over for you and hand you an easy win? Hell no, they wanna be the guy to upend you and make a name for themselves.' I'll bet that's pretty close to the scolding that Lomachenko received from Arum shortly after the fight, or at the very least, bet that's what popped into Arum's head.

Call it a hunch.

Yes, referee Laurence Cole did a bad job, but he's not the reason why Lomachenko was bullied and thrown off his game during the fight. It's all on Lomachenko for being undone and awed by a fighter who didn't give a damn about his Olympic gold medals or projected superstar status. Hopefully it's not an indicator that he's a little passive in his mental approach and under no circumstances will he bend the rules to win a fight. A pro like Salido is going to try everything during a fight and when he finds something that's working, there's only one way he'll stop doing it - and that is if the fighter in front of him makes him stop. Vasyl Lomachenko never gave him a reason to stop.

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Radam G says:

As often is -- just about always -- TSS Superscribe F-Lo is straight-up teaching and peaching da whole d@mn truth to help the boksing blind and lame. Biting off Uncle Roger May: "Dey don't know syet 'bout..." da game.

Terrible is and was ref Larry Cole[slaw]. But he is not the boksing game's law. V-Lo came into the bout all c0cky and jive. And O-Sa didn't give a darn about V-Lo's two O-Games' "gold medals or projected superstar status," and was all over his arse like attacking, angry bees from an agitated bee hive.

V-Lo fought like a man of straw. Now, hopefully, he will learn to watch upon which seasoned pro that he and da Bobfather challenge to a quick draw.

Call a spade a spade and don't try to give the incompetent referee a bad grade. On what to do, V-Lo and his pops were trapped in total darkness, not just covered by the shade.

This is a BIG learning lesson for their arses to believe that a seasoned pro would easily be tailor made. Holla!

dino da vinci says:

A referee doesn't really have a never-ending "to do" list. It is simple. It is concise. Rule number one in all of refereedom from the Gospel of Dino: a referee's chief concern is to insure that neither combatant is allowed to create an "unfair" advantage. Let's recap...it's simple, really. No unfair advantage allowed. Now, before we go on, can it be any easier to comprehend?

DaveB says:

To tell the truth, I would have thought more of Lomachenko had he resorted to dirty tactics as pay back. Yeah I'm like that.

gibola says:

Nothing to do with the referee. Perhaps the 'greatest amateur in the world' should have used a consistent jab, ran less, got some respect early instead of jumping round the ring, holding, pitty-patting and not taking the numerous opportunities he had to counter Salido's reckless charges. Mikey Garcia would have KO'd Lomachenko in 5 rounds. We now know he's not a great boxer and we can base that on the 36 minutes in the ring he spent in the ring with Salido. He's a very flawed, uncertain boxer who hasn't got a clue of how to 'boss' or pace a fight (probably because this was only his second). What I don't get is how if he's so great he couldn't win the early rounds when he was fresh. When you think of the great amateurs you imagine if they got put in over their heads early in their careers they would get off to a flying start then fade. Surely Amir Khan, Andre Ward, PBF or ODLH would use their speed to surge into an early lead against a guy like Salido then he would come on. Lomachenko was poor at the start,

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middle and end (bar the last round). What a disaster this rush for a title has proved. Glad for Salido (though he should have made weight).

Carmine Cas says:

Yup, blame his corner, management, and most of all blame Lomachenko. Salido bent a lot of rules to provide him with an advantage, it was up to Loma to bend them back.

Yes, Laurence Cole is an atrocious ref who only gets these high profile assignment because of his daddy; Dickhe*ad Cole, I mean Dickie. But Vasyl should have attempted some foul play as well based on what I've seen with Cole he probably would have warned him but it would have gained Salido's respect.

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Matthew says:

Frank is absolutely correct. Anyone who follows the sport closely enough knows that Laurence Cole is a terrible referee, and that the only reason he continues to get high-profile assignments (particularly in Texas) is because his daddy is the commissioner. You can't rely on the referee to help you out; take matters into your own hands. I'm reminded of the Evander Holyfield-Michael Dokes fight that I watched as a young teenager. Dokes hit Holyfield with at least three solid low blows in first round alone. After Richard Steele broke the fighters and issued Dokes a warning, Holyfield hit Dokes with an uppercut square on the protective cup. Dokes doubled over almost immediately. This was not an errant punch, this was a deliberate low blow. In fact, analyst Alex Wallau said as much. Holyfield threw that punch on purpose, to get Dokes' respect. He was told to do this by Lou Duva and George Benton. And you know what? The low blows from Dokes stopped almost immediately. The message was sent. That is the mistake that Lomachenko made. Had he retaliated early, Salido might have stopped his rough tactics.

Radam G says:

Great recall, Matt! You DA MAN! Holla!

gibola says:

Regardless of the fouling, the greatest amateur in the world couldn't outbox Orlando Salido.

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Nuff' said.