

Devon Alexander Passed The Test With Just Enough Colors Flying...BORGES

Written by Ron Borges
Monday, 27 June 2011 15:46



Some people will look at Devon Alexander's split decision victory over Lucas Matthisse Saturday night and say it was a gift. If it was, it was a well-earned one.

Certainly if you are Matthisse or any of his relatives you'd be justified feeling that way. After all, it is the second straight time in which he fought a highly-rated American in his hometown (or within the shadow of it) and came away a controversial split decision loss, so if he's beginning to feel like an American trying to win a decision in Germany it would be understandable.

First it was a fading Zab Judah who barely escaped Matthisse's powerful clutches in Newark and now Alexander only miles from his home in St. Louis. Matthisse floored both of them and seemed the aggressor in each case yet four of the six judges said he came up short... so when he lamented Saturday's loss it was easy to see his point.

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But did he win the fight? Or, more to the point, did the former WBC junior welterweight champion lose it in his comeback bout after Timothy Bradley intimidated him and then stopped him with a butt-induced cut over his right eye?

I'm not sure Alexander won Saturday night but I'm not sure he lost either. What I am sure of is that he acquitted himself well against a very tough opponent on the heels of having been out fought physically and mentally by Bradley in a unification match that was the biggest fight of his life until Saturday night. What made Matthyse bigger was that if Alexander again caved in he would have been finished as a major factor in the 140-pound division.

Whether you thought Alexander won or not (personally I thought it was a draw because while Alexander won more rounds Matthyse evened the score by knocking him on his can), you could not quibble with either the former champion's willingness to stand in with the more powerful Matthyse or the fact that he twice came back from rounds in which he was in trouble to win the next round.

Alexander didn't answer all the questions that still surround his future but he answered the biggest one: was he a fighter who could come back from a bad night and not double it up with another one? Emphatically, the answer to that question was yes.

"I had flashbacks from my last fight," Alexander admitted. "But I wasn't going to lose two fights in a row. I made a conscious decision to bring the fight out in me because people had their doubts about me."

Alexander's post-fight comments were nearly as important as the victory. He didn't claim he overwhelmed Matthyse. He didn't claim there were no residual effects from the loss to Bradley. He didn't claim he fought his best fight.

What he said was the same thing he did – he acted in a truthful way, not wasting his time or our good sense trying to say the fight had been anything but what it was – a difficult test that he passed.

Not with flying colors to be sure but with enough colors flying that he can legitimately go forward from here and challenge the likes of Amir Khan and Judah or call for rematches with Bradley or Matthyse with reasonable hope that he might get them.

Two of the judges scored the fight 96-93, one for Alexander and the other for Matthyse. I didn't agree with either and wondered if we had been watching the same fight. The third had it 95-94 for Alexander, as did I, but had the same score gone in the other direction by the same margin I couldn't quarrel with it.

The fact of the matter is it was a close fight in which Alexander (22-1) outboxed Matthyse in many rounds but it was the Argentinean who did the most damage, not only dropping Alexander but also banging up his face. So if you look at boxing as the guy who does the most damage wins then raise Matthyse's hand and move on.

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But boxing is more than that. It is about skill, will, ring generalship and who is dictating the terms of engagement. In at least six of those rounds it was Alexander who was in charge and usually that's enough to win a 10-round fight. The fact that he was dropped by Matthyse (28-2) cost Alexander but he came back to regain control of things, for which he deserved both credit and recognition for not allowing his experience with Bradley to decide who he would become going forward.

Regardless, one's heart had to go out to Matthyse, who now has two losses on his record by the thinnest of margins. After the decision was announced he admitted it was a tough fight but added that he'd "been robbed" and why would he think otherwise?

Yet even if so it was so, it was petty theft at best because it was not like he dominated Alexander. He landed the heavier punches to be sure and had Alexander down once but was unable to press that advantage into anything resembling lasting trouble for the former champion and in many rounds he ate a lot more leather than he threw.

Could his hand have been legitimately raised any way? Sure, and so could Alexander's. In a world where all things are fair this would simply mean they do it again in the near future to settle their differences (or the judges') but that's about as likely as Judah giving Matthyse a second shot.

Those kinds of things only happen these days when they can't be avoided. But while Alexander may be able to avoid a rematch with Matthyse in the near term what he can't avoid is the obvious – he lacks sufficient punching power to keep guys like Matthyse, Bradley, Khan or probably even Judah off him for long.

That makes winning a lot more difficult (although not impossible) because he must control the ring with speed, slick defense, movement, fast hands, a stinging jab and an ability to get in, let his hands go and then get out before anything comes back. What he can't control it with is fear of unconsciousness.

The more powerful punchers who are also blessed with good chins like Matthyse begin to feel they can safely close the distance and when they do they go to work on his body to take away some of his foot speed before then attacking the head. That worked well for Bradley and to a lesser extent for Matthyse. The difference against the latter was that Alexander refused to be worn down mentally.

Although he was often pressed and nailed more than a few times by Matthyse he stuck to who he is – a boxer willing to fight when he has to, but content to stick and move when he can. In the end, Devon Alexander seemed to do enough of both to escape (barely) the challenge of Lucas Matthyse.

What was important to his long term future was that he did it the way he had to do it – by acting like a professional and fighting like one too. All the top names in the division pack more power than he does and will attack him in the same way Bradley and Matthyse did. To defeat them he must remain completely focused, well conditioned and in command of his boxing skills at all

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times, all things that are up to him.

There will be nothing easy in the fistic future of Devon Alexander from here on out but after Saturday night he can be thankful for one thing: because of the way he fought he still has a future. What he does with it, he will decide.

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mortcola says:

Some people have called this a robbery. No way. I like Matthisse, and I respect the Maidana-like effort he made in there. But Devon fought through it, stopped him in his tracks with MANY sharp, accurate counters, never let Matthisse finish the exchanges, and although many of his combinations were partly shoe-shine, he also landed lots of legitimate scoring blows. He showed guts and skill in there, and never let Lucas establish or maintain an advantage. Fair decision. I had Alexander by a point, even though I kept thinking that Matthisse was gonna land a show-closer. Hats off to both guys.

deepwater says:

Devon way overrated. he loses the next one he will be on espn if he is lucky

riverside says:

Backpedaling, No robbery, Ala chavez/whitaker, but definely a win for lucas! for devon he had home court, fans backing you up, Devon should of used his skills, dominate at distance and pick his shots. Just by circumstances Devon lost. He should of dominated the fight, Just imagen Devon going to Aergentina, to fight in his back yard? Matthisse looked like he was one shot away from putting Devon to sleep, didn't happen, but he dictated the late tempo. how about a rematch for the sake of boxing. Neutral grounds, Prediction a clear Ud for Devon.

brownsugar says:

I was also impressed with the effort Alexander showed against Matthisse. He never stopped fighting back. Now that his trainer is going to let Alexander move up to welterweight he should look that much better... When Alexander began his pro career he didn't bounce so much and was laying guys out with one punch... once he moves up.. he should regain some of that comfort-zone and confidence back. (although the competition gets that much harder)... look out Paulie Malignaggi...Devon is coming after you first!!

Shoulder Roll Defense says:

Devon has reached his peak and although he is only 24, he isn't going to get any better, therefore what you see is what you get with him. He doesn't commit to his punches or sit down

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on them for power when he needs to and a skilled boxer puncher will destroy this kid. He hasn't looked good since Juan Urango blindly walked into a uppercut and got knocked out. On a another note, I told you guys not to sleep on K-9. I would much rather see Canelo fight K-9 and unify the titles than fight second tier European fighters. Holler back!

Radam G says:

Alex Da not-so-Great Devon won the bout. Enough said! Holla!

brownsugar says:

I like Devon moving up to 147 he's not done... can't ever right off a fighter with his drive and ambition... btw where's Kotelnik, why is Don King not getting that guy his well earned exposure?

the Roast says:

I like the idea of getting K-9 in the mix. Put him in with Alexander or Alvarez and lets see what happens.