Written by Ron Borges
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Justice is a relative thing but Erislandy Lara probably got all of it that he could hope for from boxing on Wednesday when the New Jersey State Athletic Commission indefinitely suspended the three judges who robbed him with their pencils Saturday night.

Robbery is a felony in New Jersey but not in boxing and so Al Bennett, Hilton Whitaker and Don Givens will suffer no real loss, at least not the kind the former Cuban champion had to absorb despite giving former welterweight champion Paul Williams a beating so lop-sided HBO analyst Roy Jones was screaming for his corner to stop the fight because “He’s taking a real killing here tonight.’’

Apparently not in the opinion of two blind mice and one myopic one. Bennett at least had the good sense to call it a draw (which it was not) but Givens (116-114) and Whitaker (115-114) somehow concluded that because Paul Williams threw more punches it didn't matter that an underdog like Lara actually landed more punches.

I have received countless e-mails asking how this kind of things happens, the implication being that corruption is the only answer. Although we'll never know for sure I think it was, as it often is, the more lethal combination of ineptitude and judges arriving at the arena with a preconceived notion of how the fight should go.

Certainly Lara was a heavy underdog despite being 15-0-1. Williams was not only the bigger name and a two-time champion but by far the more experienced fighter in a HBO bout of this magnitude. But from the opening bell to the final one, Lara dominated so clearly the only way you could have concluded otherwise was if you were watching a fight in your head that you already recorded.

Believe it or not this happens more often than you might think with judges (and often broadcasters as well) failing to recognize that something unexpected is happening right in front of their lying eyes.

In Lara's case, he was all but knocking Williams' head off his shoulders, repeatedly landing the heavier, more telling blows. According to Compubox statistics Lara landed 49 per cent of his power (non-jab) punches and 42 per cent overall, numbers which make clear how dominant he was.

HBO's resident judge, Harold Lederman, had Lara 117—111 and that seemed about right. The only way you could score such a fight 116-114 the other way – a scoring flip of 4-5 rounds – was if you had already fought the fight in your head and subconsciously decided what was going to happen. In such a scenario, by the time you realize something is going on you've given the wrong guy the fight.

None of the three judges were experienced judging fights of this magnitude with Bennett having never worked an HBO or SHOWTIME main event and that, too, might have been part of the problem. But there is another problem here as well that Wednesday's suspensions did not acknowledge.

Why were three such inexperienced judges all working the main event? And who concluded they were ready?

New Jersey State Athletic Commission head Aaron Davis said in a statement that all three judges would be required to undergo additional training prior to judging another professional boxing event but what about him or whoever else was involved in selecting the three blind mice to work the bout?

If after reviewing the tape, as Davis did, and concluding all three judges should be suspended, should not the result also be suspended? Should not a rematch be ordered and the result

vacated?

Now the state of New Jersey probably has no authority to force Williams into granting Lara a rematch but HBO does because it holds the checkbook and could simply say “Until you give this guy a rematch we won’t buy any fight you’re involved in.’’ It does not, after all, HAVE to televise Paul Williams.

That is not to say the result was Williams’ fault or that of the powerful men behind him – promoter Dan Goossen and chief advisor/manager Al Haymon. But while they may not have done Lara wrong they are the ones who can make things right. Suspending three incompetent judges is not.

Comment on this article

FighterforJC says:

The "inexperience" was a thin alibi. This was deliberate, no question.

Radam G says:

Boksing justice is no JUSTICE! These suckas should do the right and decent thing, and change this bull**** into a no contest. But pride about being idiots in charge won't let them see the light. Strong and stubborn are idiots' leading a MIGHT and simpleton FIGHT! Holla!

the Roast says:

Yet another black eye for boxing. At least the mainstream has no idea who these fighters are.

brownsugar says:

I watched the fight several times, got Lara ahead each time but not by huge margins... however Paul will flip monster truck tires up stadium steps.. do pushups when he gets to the top. shadow box with heavy gauge chains,.. but he won't take a half hour a day to learn how to dodge a straight left hand... that is lazy.