

Why The New Jersey Judges May Have Thought Williams-Lara Was An Amateur Fight...LOTIERZO

Written by Frank Lotierzo
Thursday, 21 July 2011 09:09



The fallout from the abysmal scoring and decision rendered by the judges in the Paul Williams-Erislandy Lara junior middleweight elimination bout lit up the boxing community like we haven't seen in some time. As a result, judges Don Givens, Hilton Whitaker (who both scored the fight in favor of Williams) and Al Bennett, who scored it a draw, were suspended indefinitely by the New Jersey State Athletic commission. Hooray for the New Jersey commission for reacting properly. That's all well and good, but what does this do to prevent this from happening again in New Jersey, New York or Las Vegas in the future? Perhaps it will scare the judges in the future, but that puts them in a bigger conundrum than what Givens, Whitaker and Bennett faced prior to Williams-Lara.

For years I've said to friends, colleagues and fans that when deplorable decisions by boxing judges are submitted, there's only one of two reasons for it: 1) the judges are totally inept and shouldn't be allowed to work a fight or 2) they're persuaded in a passive-aggressive manner as to which way the close rounds should go so that the next significant fight can be made - and more importantly, the judges will remain in the running to work it or be part of the card.

Is it really hard to fathom that all three judges that worked the Williams-Lara fight approached it with the mindset that, although they have nothing against Erislandy Lara, boxing, from a business vantage point, is probably best served if Williams wins. Paul is a big star and there are potential monster fights that can be made down the road involving him against Sergio Martinez, Manny Pacquiao and maybe even Floyd Mayweather, if he gets by the relative unknown Lara. Therefore, in order for them to score rounds for Lara, he'd have to win them conclusively. And that's what turned out to be the problem for them because he did. Either the three judges were too inept to see it or were afraid to score the bout in favor of Lara unless he beat Williams half to death, which he didn't.

Why The New Jersey Judges May Have Thought Williams-Lara Was An Amateur Fight...LOTIERZO

Written by Frank Lotierzo
Thursday, 21 July 2011 09:09

Sadly, a lot of boxing judges have to work fights in a manner that leaves them vulnerable. Score the fight correctly and go against the money fighter and it'll be a long time before you work again. Sure, scoring the fight as to what took place in the ring will keep the judges in favor with the fans and writers, but it won't help to get their phone to ring again for the next big card. Only this time the judges were thrown under the bus by the commission, something that's never happened before. And let's be honest, Williams Dec-12 over Lara isn't anywhere close to the worst decision we've seen in boxing or Atlantic City for that matter.

If the New Jersey Commission is so honorable and trying to do the right thing they should tell us how their judges are appointed and what they do to go on to become judges. I applied to be a boxing judge in New Jersey to deputy commissioner Sylvester Cuyler back in 1996 or 1997. Cuyler knew of my background and 30 plus years of experience in boxing as a fighter, writer and fight collector. However, that was during the time that Larry Hazzard was the top man, and I wasn't one of the boys and viewed as an outsider. And believe me, those type of groups and factions still exist in the boxing community. Anyhow, in order to discourage me, Cuyler told me that in order for me to get to the point to where I could judge four and six round professional bouts I had to tour New Jersey and Pennsylvania and score amateur fights for three or four years. Then he'd review my cards and if I did a good job scoring three round amateur bouts, I'd be issued a license as a professional boxing judge. To which I said, 'in all honesty Mr. Cuyler, I can start tonight and render competent decisions as well or better than any judge you have working now. In fact, I've watched more live boxing over the last 30 years than every judge you have working fights at this time combined.'

At the end of the day I said thanks, but no thanks. He won and I never pursued becoming a boxing judge. That experience was enough for me to realize that I wouldn't be a good fit for the New Jersey Commission and probably every other commission in the country. My personality and temperament would've never allowed me to become one of the good ole boys and I left it at that. So I for one am not all giddy about what the New Jersey Commission has done and suspect that'll it'll be business as usual in the future. It's just that this time the three judges (Givens, Whitaker and Bennett) were blindsided when they were thrown under the bus. Yes, I'm glad the commission nailed all three judges though I seriously doubt it'll change anything and there have been worse decisions (although there was nothing indecisive in Lara's winning the fight), but I'll take small victories where they come.

Everybody who watched Williams-Lara, and who knows what they were watching, knows that Lara beat Williams on July 9th 2011 in Atlantic City. I'm just not sure that the judges also didn't see it. It very well may be that they couldn't consciously score the fight the way their eyes saw it, because of the mitigating factors mentioned earlier. The fight was too easy to score because all the memorable punches were landed by one fighter while the other one was missing with almost every meaningful punch he threw.

Then again, in amateur boxing, activity and volume count more than clean punching and power. So if New Jersey judges Givens, Whitaker and Bennett gained their licenses by scoring amateur fights (which I doubt) than maybe Williams really did deserve the decision over Lara?

Frank Lotierzo can be contacted at GlovedFist@Gmail.com

Why The New Jersey Judges May Have Thought Williams-Lara Was An Amateur Fight...LOTIERZO

Written by Frank Lotierzo
Thursday, 21 July 2011 09:09

[Comment on this article](#)

Radam G says:

Suspending these knuckleheads mean NOTHING!. Their arses should be FIRED and the fight should be called a no contest. I'm reminded how when I was a toddler and kid in the late 1970s and 1980s, U.S. amateur boxing cleared up stupid superbad decisions by having a board to review those decisions and eventually banding racist judges and referees. It is very clear to me that the CUBAN was a victim of extreme _____! No matter how much things change, you will always have those who lag behind in their mudholes of nullification. Holla!