Written by Michael Woods
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In the pay per view TV opener, Josesito Lopez took on Jessie Vargas, in a junior welterweight/welterweight bout, in front of a couple hundred people at the MGM Grand. Lopez was the aggressor, but that aggression wasn't of the effective variety for the most part. He came forward, and Vargas often backed up, but Vargas piled up points along the way. As we awaited the judges scores, one wondered if the chosen arbiters would be clever enough to reward the man who didn't press forward the whole fight. Oftentimes, they aren't.

Happily, Duane Ford, Dick Houck, Patricia Jarman did; Ford, Houck and Jarman, in order, called it 95-94, 95-94 (Lopez), 96-93, for Vargas. Houck might want to watch this one again, and score it again, see if he gets the same score.

Many in the petite crowd booed., for the record, but that could be because Lopez bused in a few loads of fans.

Vargas had the edge, stat-wise, went 167-851 to 122-509 for Lopez.

Sorry to digress right off the bat, but why is the boxing culture such that fans oftentimes just show up for the big headline bout? I've sensed a livelier vibe at my daughter's pre-K class, when they kids knew it was cupcake day, because one of them had a birthday. This quite often happens at casino shows, which are meant to draw the high roller, who will drop dough at the tables, not the hardcore fight fan, who actually has something invested in the bouts i.e. he has a rooting interest in one or more fighter.

The 22-year-old Vargas (16-0 with 9 KOs; from Las vegas; 142 pounds) is with Floyd Mayweather, while the 27 year old Lopez (29-3 with 17 KOs; from CA; 140 1/2) is with Golden Boy.

Larry Merchant called the action along with Jim Lampley and Manny Steward.

In the first, I found it hard to tell each man from the other. Vargas' blows looked a bit crisper early on. His left hook looked like it would cause some hell once he got really warmed up. He used his feet smartly, sliding side to side to keep Lopez off balance.

Steward during the third round talked about Cris Arreola as a potential foe for Wladimir Klitschko, his fighter. Cris already fought Vitali and it didn't go well. Manny said he wanted to have Wlad fight in the US, and that he talked to Arreola's people. They said they'd like Arreola to fight a few more times, and then sometime next year, he'd likely glove up against Wlad.

Lopez had more luck in the third, as he closed the distance. Inside, he scored points. When Vargas used his legs, got off and got on the bus, he did well. But by the fifth, his power seemed to lessen. We wondered what the judges were thinking. Did they like the man coming forward, Lopez, whose aggression wasn't as effective as it could've been, because Vargas' movement blunted the offense.

A slice on Lopez' right eye became apparent in the sixth. It didn't look like that would put him off..

In the seventh, Vargas ate a sharp left hook. When Vargas eats one, it's flush. His head movement could stand some work, if I may say.

During the seventh, Merchant commented on how smart Floyd is for showing how much he loves his children, publicly, as he smooched them on camera. He hinted that it is done for show. See, even at 80, Merchant is a smart politician.

Harold Lederman has Vargas ahead 67-66 after seven. Vargas had a point taken for a low blow early in the eighth by ref Tony Weeks, who hadn't to my recollection put out a prior warning. If he won the round, which he did, the judges would score it 9-9.

Vargas had to get credit for his discipline. He kept popping and moving, and when Lopez got close, Vargas would jet. He did so through the tenth, apart from a couple hellacious left hooks with 35 seconds to go which buzzed him a bit, and we'd go to the cards. Lederman had it 96-93, Vargas.

SPEEDBAG Pacquiao-Marquez 24/7 debuts Oct. 22.

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**brownsugar says:**

what a hard ught fight... you rarely see young guys take these tough fights this early in their careers... Lopez will never have to worry about staying busy after last nights performance. Great effort from Vargas.