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What did you think of Donaire's effort tonight, readers? (Chris Farina-Top Rank)

WBO 122 pound champion Nonito Donaire sent Jeffrey Mathebula down to the mat for the first

time in his career, in round four, and it looked like that might be all she wrote, because the South African arose on weak legs. But the bell clanged to end the round, and Mathebula, the IBF champ, regained his legs, and kept on chopping away. He did well to enter the later rounds, but not well enough to sway the judges his way. Donaire scored a UD12 victory in his first title defense, via scores of 117-110, 118-109, 119-108, at the Home Depot Center in Carson, California.

Donaire went 151-515, to 231-919, but the judges liked the power edge of Donaire. Readers, did you? Was this scoring solid?

After, Donaire spoke to Max Kellerman. He said Mathebula was tough and faster than he thought, and hard to counter. The jab of the loser was hard to handle, he said, of the loser, who he termed a "great champion." Of the knockdown, he said he didn't expect it, but later on, was smarter defensively. The winner said he should have used the right more. He said he thought the fight was close. "It was fun, I really had a good time," he said, and then stated he had cramping in round six, after his leg fell asleep before the fight. He said he has had that experience before. And what's next? Arce, Rigo, Nishi? He mentioned Nishioka, then Mares, then Rigo, and then Nishioka again. He said soon he will go to 126, but he wants to get stronger first.

The loser had a bit of luck early, with volume, and making Donaire miss. Mathebula stayed busy, and regained his legs enough to stay mobile enough to stay safe for the most part, so some had to be surprised that he got into the later rounds. Certainly some of those folks who like Donaire as top five pound for pounder might have thought he'd take the loser out after that knockdown, but many of his boosters, in all likelihood, might be conceding that his pop isn't the same as he moves up in weight class.

On the HBO feed, it was sort of funny to hear how Bob Papa, Max Kellerman, Roy Jones and Harold Lederman all talked with fresh memories of The Decision in their heads; Lederman noted midway through that Mathebula's volume, in his eyes, didn't speak more than Donaire's crisper tosses. Papa lauded Lederman for explaining the though processes of the judges at one point as well.

Donaire was the forward mover, as he stalked the South African, who moved to avoid contact, and also featured an active upper body to steer clear of launches. His jab was not Holmesian at all, but he was active enough with it to put Donaire off. He threw about 60 of them per round,

but these weren't scoring blows, not like Donaire's clean connects. Or were they? Dobaire's face looked like he'd been in a fight by the fifth, with some swelling telling Mathebula he was doing some nice work.

Lederman had it 86-84 after round nine, and the judge said Donaire chased too much, and didn't throw enough. He also noted Donaire complaining of a leg falling asleep; is it just me, or are we seeing a spate of guys with leg woes, cramps, calf problems, etc, in the last couple years? Donaire stepped it up in round 11, after trainer Robert Garcia told him to excel in the championship rounds. Blood flowed from the loser's mouth in this round, and we wondered if he broke his jaw. His punch output was less than half his typical output after eating a mean right. The right came perfectly timed, as Mathebula was readying his own right, and Nonito spied it. (It turned out he had a cracked tooth.) In round twelve, Mathebula got a bit busier. But not busy enough.

SPEEDBAG If there is a mullet Hall of Fame, eternal mullet-man Nick Durandt, Mathebula's trainer, should have a wing to himself.

--You can watch the fights on HBO at 10 AM on Sunday.

Will Rosinsky of Queens gave a decent account of himself, but Kelly Pavlik (now 40-2) showed himself to be of a higher grade than in the end. Pavlik won a UD10 in a super middleweight tussle, and we should be seeing him step up to a higher grade foe next time around. he said after he wants carl Froch, Lucian Bute, Andre Ward and Mikkel Kessler.

Pavlik sent Rosinsky, now 16-2, down in the second, but he rose, and with clear eyes. Some might have liked more of a killer instinct in the victor, if you want to play critic. The judges saw it 98-91, 98-91, 97-92.

"It was a tough fight," the victor said after. "I didn't get off as fast as I wanted to. It was a good 10-round fight."