

Solo Boxeo Ringside Report: Clear View to a Poor Decision

Written by Joel Stern, SPECIAL TO TS
Sunday, 23 September 2012 23:32



Saturday night the Woodland, Ca. Community and Senior Center played host to Solo Boxeo Tecate. promoted by Golden Boy promotions in association with Paco Presents and Don Chargin productions. The main event featured quality prospects Paul Mendez, 10-2-1 (4 KO) and DonYil Livingston, 8-2-1(4 KO). Both fighters needed a win to springboard their careers.

The fight was filled with the controlled action of serious professional boxers, but ended in controversy as the officials proved not as fit for the task as the fighters. In the opening minute of the seventh, Mendez pinned Livingston against the ropes, unleashing a combination that ended with a hard, digging left hook that dug well below Livingston's beltline and directly into the right side of his crotch. Livingston went down as if poked with an electric cattle prod, splayed out on the canvas on all fours.

As I had a direct view across the ring and saw the low blow clearly, I was surprised to see the referee, Dan Collins, begin to administer the count. So were some of Mendez's corner men as I heard one of them say, "they didn't see it, they didn't see it." Livingston arose at the count of eight, but with his hands down at his side and in obvious distress, the referee put his arm around Livingston and walked him to his corner, ending the fight. Mendez's team stormed the ring to celebrate the victory with their fighter, and maybe, just as importantly, to hastily take his gloves off to make the idea of a restart less realistic.

Livingston's chief second, Henry Ramirez, also stormed the ring in order to grab the referee's arm to inform him that Livingston was hit with a low blow. Both fighters' camps filled the ring.

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Sweat poured down the now literally red face of referee Dan Collins. Collins asked the judge sitting to the right of me, Susan Thomas Gitlin, if she saw a low blow. She answered no. A crowd of 20 to 30 spectators including much of Livingston's family and friends gathered around the ringside Telefutera T.V. monitor. They let out audible gasps and shouts of "no" as they must have seen the replay of the low blow. Referee Collins returned to my side of the ring, leaned over to judge Susan Thomas Gitlin and said, "Red corner is disqualified, blue corner wins." Livingston fought out of the blue corner.

A minute later the bell rang, signaling the announcement of the decision. I expected mayhem to ensue from a disqualification ruling, but instead the ring announcer declared Mendez winner by TKO at 43 seconds of the seventh round.

After the bout, I asked referee Collins about the decision. He said he did not see the low blow and that all the three judges he polled did not see the low blow so his TKO ruling stands. When asked why he told the one judge there was a disqualification, he said that talk of disqualification came from 'over here,' referring to the state commission table we were standing next to, but that his decision superceded that call.

Mike Guzman, the CSAC official in charge, stated that Livingston could appeal, and if granted, the result would turn into a technical decision. With Livingston behind on all three scorecards at the time of stoppage, his appeal would only change the nature of his loss. Guzman said he had no idea where talk of a disqualification came from. The crowd left the arena quickly and quietly, shocked from sudden ending of a fight whose final act was building to a crescendo.

No one was cheated as much as Livingston, who was coming on stronger at the time of stoppage. Livingston handled a loss he knew he didn't deserve with class, even calming furious members of his team in the ring. Paul Mendez was also cheated of a clear win in a fight fought with conviction and clean, crisp punches, especially when he worked off of his jab. Sitting in a chair outside of the now cleared ring with a blank exhausted look on his face sat Mendez's trainer and strategist, Dean Familton, emotionally spent from the tension of his boxer's fight and the confusion following. He looked at me and said, "It is a win."

Next to him was Mendez's cutman Joe Chavez, a lifetime veteran of the fight game. He shook his head. "These refs," was all he had to say.

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How a referee and three judges could fail to see the low blow may just be the bad luck of poor angles. Livingston should have been given 5 minutes to recover and continue to fight, to pursue his life dedicated dream. But if any sport has more 'shouldas' than boxing, I would like to know.

In other action, Manuel 'Tino' Avila, 10-0 (3), fought through a hip injury that occurred in training that limited his sparring and fought through the tough veteran pressure from John Albert Molina, 32-20-3 (20) to box his way to a unanimous 79-73 decision on all the judges' scorecards. Guy Robb, 8-1 (4), of Sacramento outworked Jonathon Alcantara, 6-8-2 (1), of Novato. Robb knocked Alcantara down in the 3rd on his way to a 60-53 unanimous decision. In the opener, Jonathan Chicas, 7-0 (3), outgunned John Mendoza, 7-7 (3) winning their rematch 50-45 on all the cards.

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