

## Rodriguez Stops Over-His-Head Escalera on HBO At Start of Round 8

Written by Michael Woods

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Jason Escalera showed the sort of heart that will draw him praise from fight fans, but might concern the neurologist down the line in the main event of HBO's Boxing After Dark show, which unfolded at Foxwoods in Connecticut on Saturday night. Edwin Rodriguez pounded Escalera with hard, clean punches from round one through the beginning of round eight, when Steve Smoger stepped in to end the scrap, such as it was.

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Escalera's right ear was busted up, and the ending came 12 seconds into the eighth of a fight that wasn't much of one. Rodriguez is clearly of a higher class than Escalera, and showed it throughout, with the winner going 231-537 to 95-440 in punch stats.

After, Rodriguez talked to Max Kellerman. The boxer was happy on this night, which fell on his twins' sixth birthday. Next for him? He said he is ready for the big names. He said he'd go to 175, to fight Kelly Pavlik, or Jean Pascal, who the victor called a friend.

Rodriguez (age 27; living in Worcester, MA; 21-0 with 14 KOs entering) was 166 pounds at the weigh in, 186 plus on fight night, while Escalera (age 27; living in NJ; 13-0-1 with 12 KOs entering) was 165 pounds, and 174 on fight night.

In the first, Escalera lost his mouthpiece twice early. He ate hard, clean shots, as Rodriguez looked to be in predator mode, big time.

In the second, Escy woke up some. He still didn't move his head much.

In the third, Rod pumped the jab, moved, stayed at a smart distance, timed Escy with the left hook. In round four, once again, Escy lost his 'piece. He then got hit on the belt, and took extra time to recover, after he complained it went low. In round five, a right hurt Escy. But he got his senses and made it to the end of the frame. "You gotta move your damn head," Escalera's corner told him after the round. He didn't and ate clean shots in the sixth. Escy lost the piece in the seventh, as well, but no point was taken. Smoger saw enough at the beginning of the eighth, as a left hook landed clean, and the ref didn't like Escalera's eyes or legs.

Roy Jones afterwards said that Rodriguez' experience showed and he looks forward to sterner tests for the winner.