

Johnathon Banks KOs Seth Mitchell

Written by Michael Woods

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In the TV opener on HBO, Seth Mitchell, the latest hope for a boxing public which craves an American player at heavyweight, took on Johnathon Banks, a protege and pal of the Kronk sage, Emanuel Steward. Banks was busy last week, breaking training to sub in for Manny, cornering Wladimir Klitschko for his bout against Mariusz Wach. We wondered if his head was screwed on straight?

Mitchell, a footballer at Michigan State who took up boxing at age 25, after he finally decided his knees couldn't handle football, is one to look up to. His mom raised him, as dad was nowhere to be found. A win would put him a step closer to a crack at a Klitschko, or at least a Povetkin.

Mitchell was seen as raw, but with power to burn. Raw won out, as Banks hurt him in round two. He sent him down twice, and then on the third occasion, the ref halted it. Banks landed 25 of 42 power shots in the fateful seconds, and his tutor, who always wanted his guys to be the aggressor, go for the stoppage, was somewhere, smiling.

After, Banks said after that he dedicated the win to Manny, because Manny loved knockouts. The winner said he knew he had a strong foe in front of him. He said the loser made a mistake not grabbing his arms when he was hurt. Larry Merchant said that he'd seen Banks before and he didn't act like a tiger. The winner said maybe turning 30 kicked it into a gear for him. Will he fight a Klitschko now? He said he's just thankful for meeting Manny. Banks, who has been fighting since age 15, said he wasn't scared of the bigger man. He said he knows how to fight Wladimir Klitschko, and in fact, made half a living figuring out Klitschko, so yes, we might see that fight in the future.

Mitchell after the fight said he reached on Banks, and was caught by a counter. He admitted he grabbed at the waist, not the arms. Are his dreams crushed? "Not at all," he said. "It set me

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back a little bit...Don't be sorry for me, be sorry for my next opponent."

The Michigananer Banks, at 28-1-1, was 218 pounds. Mitchell, 25-0-1, from Brandywine, Maryland, was 242. Both men are 30 years old.

In the first, a right cross tagged Banks. A right had Banks holding at 1:30. Trainer Andre Hunter told Mitch not to fall in after throwing. Javan Hill told Banks to "let his damn hands go."

In the second, he did; Mitchell went down, with 1:52 left. He held on, and Banks flurried. He went down again, with 46 seconds to go. Down Mitchell went again, and ref Eddie Cotton waved it off. "An amazing upset, Steward magic," said Jim Lampley.