

CJ Ross & Eugenia Williams Might Have A Lot To Talk About

Written by Bernard Fernandez
Tuesday, 17 September 2013 10:26



The goal of gender equality, at least as it pertains to the participation of females as boxing judges for world championship bouts, took another major hit Saturday night when already-controversial judge C.J. Ross (first name: Cynthia) saw Canelo Alvarez win six of 12 rounds against Floyd Mayweather Jr. at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

Fortunately for everyone else who was actually paying attention to what had transpired in the ring, the other two assigned judges, Craig Metcalfe and Dave Moretti, had Mayweather (*seen above, in Hogan photo, reacting to the egregious Ross card*) ahead by respective margins of 117-111 and 116-112, their more prudent assessments resulting in "Money" claiming the WBA and WBC super welterweight titles that had belonged to the red-haired Mexican.

It might even be argued that Metcalfe and Moretti were overly generous to the game but outclassed Canelo. Some astute observers had Mayweather pitching a 120-108 shutout, and he also won by a Grand Canyon-esque margin on my personal scorecard, 119-109. So all's well that ends well, right?

Uh, maybe not. It has been duly noted that Ross – in the first major assignment of her career -- also saw Timothy Bradley Jr. as a 115-113 winner in his June 9, 2012, matchup with WBO welterweight champion Manny Pacquiao. Virtually everyone else pegged Pacquiao as an easy winner, but in this case Ross' blurred vision was compounded by the fact that another judge, Duane Ford, also turned in a 115-113 scorecard for Bradley, who came away with a split decision in what some have termed as a bigger robbery than the Brink's Job.

So now Ross has followed the Pacquiao-Bradley debacle with her perplexing take on Mayweather-Alvarez, which should lead to only one logical conclusion: Someday she probably will be inducted into the new Nevada Boxing Hall of Fame.

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Another female judge whose name, fairly or not, is destined to live in infamy is that of Eugenia “Jean” Williams, whose much-derided scorecard favoring Evander Holyfield in his March 13, 1999, heavyweight unification showdown with Lennox Lewis incited a firestorm of criticism, the heat and magnitude of which even Ross’ dubious scoring for Mayweather-Alvarez was unable to match. Williams submitted a card favoring Holyfield, the IBF and WBA champ, as a 115-113 winner which, coupled with the 115-115 card turned in by British judge Larry O’Connell, enabled Holyfield to hold onto his belts on a split draw. The other judge, South Africa’s Stanley Christoudoulou, had WBC titlist Lewis ahead by a 116-113 margin.

It was the last world championship fight worked by Williams, an Atlantic City, N.J., resident who nonetheless continued to draw judging assignments in her home state deep into 2012. Her last judging gig came on Oct. 12, 2012, Dorin Spivey’s 10-round majority decision over Rod Salka for the NABA lightweight championship at the Tropicana Hotel & Casino in A.C. Williams – who was inducted into the New Jersey Boxing Hall of Fame in 2011 – had Spivey, who retained his fringe title, coming out on top, 97-93.

No boxing judge’s entire body of work, regardless of gender, should be judged solely on the basis of one unpopular and disputed call, and Williams at least had a reasonably extensive resume heading into Lewis-Holyfield I (Lewis won the rematch, eight months later, on a unanimous decision). She had drawn assignments for 29 previous world title fights, including Ray Mercer-Tommy Morrison, Riddick Bowe-Jesse Ferguson and Holyfield-Mercer. Williams also should be given some credit for attempting to explain her rationale for going with Holyfield, which included scoring the fifth round for him, a round in which he was rocked several times and seemingly was on the verge of being knocked out by Lewis. Ross, on the other hand, has not gone public with any defense of her scorecard for Mayweather-Alvarez.

“I have no qualms with someone disagreeing with me,” Williams said a few days after Lewis-Holyfield I. “Everyone’s entitled to their own opinion. But I know what I saw and I’m standing firm that I did the right thing. I have no regrets.”

Well, at least she didn’t until she was called in to testify before a Grand Jury empaneled by the Manhattan District Attorney’s office to investigate charges that the three assigned judges for Lewis-Holyfield I had received improper benefits. In addition to her receiving a fee of \$5,150 for the assignment, as did O’Connell and Christoudoulou, their hotel bills and meals were paid for by Holyfield’s promoter, Don King, although that was not uncustomary for such events.

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Shown a videotape of the fight, including the fifth round that was so called into question, Williams waffled, saying that, in retrospect, she would have given that round to Lewis, thus leveling her final scorecard at 114-114. She suggested that her line of sight had been blocked by Lewis' broad back and by ringside photographers jostling for position along the apron.

"What I saw on TV is not the same as what I saw that night," she testified. "I can only go by what I looked at that night and I scored that accordingly."

Before and after her grand jury appearance, Williams was pilloried as a know-nothing judge, or worse.

"I gave Evander three rounds, at the most," said Lewis' trainer, Emanuel Steward. "From what I saw, it looked like Lennox was working with one of his sparring partners. But this sparring partner got \$20 million. It was not even a close fight. Lennox controlled him with the jab, played with him when he wanted to. We were actually having fun.

"This hurts boxing. We just can't laugh it off. Undisputed heavyweight championship of the world. New York. Madison Square Garden. And to see what happened here ... No, you can't say, 'Oh, well, that's just boxing.' I think it's disgusting."

Promoter Bob Arum, the Top Rank honcho who had no ties to either fighter, weighed in on the controversy as a presumably unbiased observer.

"I've been in boxing 35 years and I never heard of Jean Williams," huffed Arum, who was contacted at his Las Vegas office by the *New York Post*. "She has no experience in big fights. Why was she picked for this one? The fight wasn't even close. I had it 10-2 for Lewis. This isn't a difference in opinion. This was blatantly wrong."

It would be just as blatantly wrong for sexists – hey, you know who you are – to lump Williams and Ross as a matched pair, conclusive proof that women have no place in the fight game.

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There are female judges whose work has not been similarly defaced by accusations of incompetence or dishonesty. Adalaide Byrd, for one, has a pretty sterling reputation, and onetime judge Melvina Lathan has earned her spurs as the respected executive director of the New York State Athletic Commission. I'm certainly not going to forever hang Williams out to dry for one eyebrow-raising scorecard, and even Ross deserves another chance to rehab her reputation, although if I'm NSAC executive director Keith Kizer, I might have her work her way back to big assignments through a series of less high-profile fights.

In a TSS tribute to women's boxing pioneer Jackie Tonawanda, who was 75 when "Lady Ali" died of colon cancer in June 2009, I described the hurdles female fighters have to face to be taken seriously in boxing, that most macho of athletic endeavors. By extension, the same might be said of women promoters, judges and referees.

Men are supposed to be the hunter-gatherers of the human species, and as such certain occupations have long been thought (at least by guys) as their exclusive preserve. While males go off to war as soldiers, protect our streets as cops and stain boxing rings with their blood, the ladies are supposed to stay home, bear our children, bake us cookies and, if they really need to get out of the house and earn a paycheck, serve society as nurses, secretaries, waitresses, beauticians and, oh, maybe as pole dancers.

I was, of course, being facetious. But Cynthia J. Ross' latest tale from the crypt isn't making it easy to advance the notion that women are as capable of scoring a boxing match as their male counterparts. And if she doesn't believe her six-rounds-apiece assessment of Mayweather-Alvarez won't hurt her, in a professional sense, someone should put her in touch with Jean Williams.

You'd have to figure they'd have a whole lot to talk about.

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Radam G says:

WOW! Somebody oughta call a spade a spade. And a lady a lady. And a cheat a cheat. Clearly C.J. Ross was and has been on da fix. With other situations, she is not exactly in da mix. Holla!