

The Mouthpiece

*Blazing Saddles—Kennedy Dominates Vinan
Hart Blasts Turner
Sosa, Sosa, Sosa!*

By: George Hanson Jr., Esq.

Date: Saturday, June 1, 2013
Venue: Bally's, Atlantic City, New Jersey
Promoter: Peltz Boxing Promotions
Matchmaker: J. Russell Peltz & Brittany Rogers
Coverage: www.gfl.tv
Ring Announcer: Larry Tornambe
Referees: Steve Smoger & Ricky Vera
Photos: www.christoneyphotography.com



Kennedy (R.) working the jab.

De Camptown
ladies sing this song,
Doo-da, Doo-da
De Camptown
racetrack's five
miles long
Oh, de doo-da day

Goin' to run all night
Goin' to run all day
I bet my money on a
bob-tailed nag
Somebody bet on
the gray

Okay folks, if you haven't seen the 1974 Mel Brooks directed classic, *Blazing Saddles*, starring Cleavon Little and Gene Wilder please run out and buy it. "To ruin a western town, a corrupt political boss appoints a black sheriff, who promptly becomes his most formidable adversary." The movie is sheer genius with Richard Pryor, the greatest comedian of all time, sharing writing credits for the screenplay. Okay Hanson, what does this have to do with boxing? Answer: I still haven't figured it out yet. But, it is Sunday morning and I am watching *Blazing Saddles* for probably the hundredth time with my laptop propped on my knees going through my notes while I write my account of last night's boxing show which was a brilliantly matched card—outstanding! Oh de doo-da day!

Photographer Chris Toney rode into Atlantic City—like the outlaw Josey Wales manning a Gatlin gun—backpack bulging with his new camera equipment including a Canon EOS IDX with a price tag of more than \$10,000—ready to shoot anything in his path. If there is a better photographer than Toney—who has an uncanny ability to capture shots that most can only dream about—that person resides in another galaxy. I am grateful that our agreement allows me to select as many photos as I need for my articles. The return of main eventer Teon “The Technician” Kennedy and supporting cast were the ideal candidates to break in the new equipment because the action would be fast and furious and inevitably there would be knockouts. I don’t know much about photography but I was confident that the pictures would be awesome.

Teon Kennedy (17 wins – 2 losses – 2 draws – 7 kos) has been such an integral part of the Philly boxing psyche that we tend to forget that he is only 26-years-old. Most of us



have been following him since he was a nine-year-old amateur who displayed boxing acumen and skills way beyond his years. Seventeen years later we are still following the pugilist who represents the heart and soul of a boxing town that reveres fighters like him—fearless and willing to fight anyone, anywhere, any time!

Kennedy (R.) landing the left hook.

Campaigning now as a junior-lightweight, Kennedy would be fighting for the first time in almost a year since his unsuccessful bid for the WBA junior-featherweight title against champion—the amazing Cuban and two-time Olympic Gold medalist—Guillermo “The Jackal” Rigondeaux on June 9, 2012. Ring rust would be a factor in tonight’s match with upset minded Carlos Vinan (10 wins – 9 losses – 5 draws – 2 kos) of Newark, New Jersey by way of Ecuador coming off a longer hiatus than Kennedy. It has been 20 months since the Vinan swapped punches in the squared circle under the glaring ring lights. It was Vinan who handed top prospect Eric “Outlaw” Hunter his first loss back in 2007 by taking a six-round split decision at the Arena in Philadelphia—Hunter’s hometown. He strolled into Philly almost three years later and won in similar fashion against the City’s biggest ticket seller—Victor “The Fighting Barber” Vasquez at the same venue.

Kennedy, sporting a mustache and beard like he had been hibernating in a log cabin in the Poconos with Grizzly Adams, established his jab early in the scheduled 10-rounder as Vinan, who doesn’t know how to walk or step backwards, came forward. The

Technician was a little rusty as his timing was off as he missed a few left hooks to the head and body. Vinan made his presence felt by returning fire with bad intent. But, Kennedy swept the rounds without sustaining any punishment and found his groove midway through the fifth stanza when his timing returned as he peppered his adversary with well-timed uppercuts and left hooks. Vinan won the seventh round and landed his best punch in the eighth when he caught Kennedy with an overhand right. The Philly fighter has a good beard, figuratively and literally, as he absorbed the punch and continued dictating the pace.

It is safe to surmise that Kennedy wanted to close the show in dramatic fashion because he stood toe-to-toe with Vinan in the ninth round banging away at his body with some vicious shots much to the delight of the audience. He unloaded from his arsenal and it was more a testament to Vinan's toughness than a commentary on Kennedy's punching power in his new weight class. Picking up where he left off, Kennedy planted his feet on the canvas and fired away in the final round. He was hurting Vinan, leaving us all to wonder how much more punishment the rugged little man from Ecuador could sustain. With about 10 seconds remaining in the round a hard left hook anchored Vinan to the canvas. Kennedy had finally broken Vinan's will and thought the fight was over. But, the



Vinan (L.) mixing it up with Kennedy.

fallen fighter rose before referee Smoger could reach the count of four. With seconds remaining in the round, Kennedy rushed in and buckled Vinan with a combination as the bell sounded to save him and deny Kennedy a knockout. Two judges scored it 99-90 while the third had it 98-91, all for Kennedy.

Camden junior-lightweight Jason “The Machine” Sosa (8 wins – 1 loss – 3 draws – 4 kos) is a man on a mission. The affable soft-spoken 25-year-old laced on a pair of gloves five years aback, had three amateur fights and jumped head first into the professional ranks. It is little doubt that by not wasting time in the amateurs—where success is contingent on learning how to run around “fencing” with boxing gloves in order to score points instead of doling out pain and punishment—Sosa has benefitted immensely. He is the quintessential throw-back fighter who is learning his craft the old-fashioned way—by working hard in the gym and by fighting.

Sosa entered the ring draped in the Puerto Rican flag bouncing to the music of his homeland to face Georgi Kevlishvili (12 wins – 5 losses – 0 draws – 3 kos) of Gori, Georgia now residing in Philadelphia. The American Dream has turned out to be a

nightmare for Kevlishvili who migrated to the United States in 2010 with an impressive record of (11 wins – 1 loss – 0 draws – 3 kos). He has only one victory in his last five outings—his first fight on American soil— a six-round split-decision gift on March 18, 2011 against Anthony Flores. Flores should have reported the two judges that gave Kevlishvili the nod because he was robbed.

The gong sounded and Sosa took the opening round against the slick-boxing, oftentimes too-aggressive, Kevlishvili who was slightly outworked. But the Georgian took command in the second stanza with some nifty boxing putting Sosa on the deck with a well-timed right hand that landed while the Camden pugilist was squared up walking in with both feet parallel. More surprised than hurt, Sosa got up at the count of three and finished the round on good footing.

Here's the deal folks, oftentimes early success leads to later disaster. Kevlishvili got in his groove and boxed brilliantly in the third round and the first half of the fourth. But, he forgot that Sosa, like Mongo in *Blazing Saddles*, can knock a bull cold with his patented overhand right. I sat ringside and watched as Kevlishvili got too close to Sosa mixing it up, hands dropping, oblivious to the nefarious thoughts of his adversary who had a



Sosa (R.) connecting with an uppercut.

sinister smile while telling me in the pre-fight interview that the overhand right was his equalizer. Sosa was being out boxed but he was working diligently to set the stage to unleash the murderous punch. Kevlishvili was skating on thin ice in early June and I knew that it was only a matter of time before the surface broke.

Kevlishvili stunned Sosa early in the fourth round further bolstering his confidence. Switching stance from orthodox to southpaw intermittently the Georgian boxed niftily still staying within punching range. Sosa never wavered and kept probing for an opening. True to form Sosa landed a blistering overhand right that found Kevlishvili's jaw sending him sideways slumping him in the ropes. While Kevlishvili was sinking to the canvas, glove touching, Sosa never stopped punching, landing at least three more punches as referee Smoger hopped in to start the count. Kevlishvili made it to his feet by the count of four but stumbled on groggy legs like he was imbued with a bottle of *Jack Daniels* forcing Smoger to call an end to the scheduled eight-rounder at 2:21. Sosa is a man on a mission and his right hand is a 12-gauge shotgun.

Eugene "Cyclone" Hart is a Philly middleweight legend who punched so hard—he should have been arrested for the destruction he caused with his deadly left hook. His son Jesse “Hard Work” Hart (6 wins – 0 losses – 0 draws – 5 kos) is a genetic anomaly – standing 6 feet 3 inches he towers over the super-middleweight division and packs dynamite in both hands. The 23-year-old pugilist had a meteoric rise through the amateurs—winning several national championships before signing with Bob Arum’s Top Rank Inc.—joining the punch-for-pay ranks. The apple didn’t fall too far from the tree— it fell right under it as the younger Hart is a one-man wrecking crew, wreaking havoc leaving hapless bodies in the ring reminiscent of dear old dad. Last night in Atlantic City, the supremely confident prospect sauntered into the squared circle like he was headlining a rap concert with Jay-Z— sporting midnight black sunglasses— hell-bent on mayhem and gunning



down his opponent. At the opening bell he jogged out of his corner, both guns blazing at an unsuspecting Thomas “Samurai” Turner (3 wins – 3 losses – 0 draws – 2 kos) of Caldwell, Idaho and it was over before he could break a sweat!

Hart (L.) delivering a vicious uppercut.

Turner who has competed in 28 mixed martial arts bouts, never had an opportunity to weather the storm as Hart rained down upon him like an Indian monsoon unloading every single punch from his arsenal—jabs, straight rights, hooks, uppercuts—to the head and body. Turner resembled a deer trying to walk through a hail storm showing his toughness and resiliency as he came forward. It was inevitable that a murderous left hook sent him to the canvas. Turner made it to his feet before referee Vera reached the count of four and the melee resumed. Hart unloaded like a tommy gun as the referee rescued Turner saving him from further punishment at 2:15 of the opening round of the scheduled six-rounder. There is absolutely no need to pad Hart’s record with cannon fodder. Not much is gained by racing a thoroughbred against donkeys, mules or trial horses. Five more fights and Hart should fight for a world title. Carl Froch, IBF super-middleweight champion, wouldn’t be able to survive Hart’s blitzkrieg. Saddle him up!

If Mel Brooks were to make a boxing movie and sent down to central casting for a pugilist he would get Sosa’s stable mate—Philly junior-lightweight Anthony “Bad Boy” Burgin (3 wins – 0 losses – 0 draws – 1 ko). The 21-year-old sports a brilliant smile and not only looks like a fighter but also sounds like a student of the sweet science. Most

important, the amateur tendencies that are commonplace with so many new professionals are absent from his game. The only noticeable deficiency is that Burgin tends to fight leaning forward with most of his weight on his front leg giving up his physical advantages becoming more susceptible to being countered. Boxing is about timing, spacing and distance. Mimicking Floyd “Money” Mayweather, who lures opponents by keeping his chin over his front leg, has proven to be disastrous for many inexperienced upstarts.

Burgin squared off against Nuwan “The Lion of Sri Lanka” Jayakody (1 win – 0 losses – 0 draws – 1 ko) from Washington D.C. by way of Nittabuwa, Sri Lanka in a scheduled four-rounder. Burgin worked a stiff jab earlier sticking it to his opponent’s head and midsection. Jayakody marched forward throwing punches barely missing on numerous occasions with a murderous overhand right. The fight continued at the same pace round after round with Burgin using his superior boxing skills against a tough opponent who wanted to capitalize on the Philly fighter’s tendency to lean forward. In the final round,



Jayakody connected with a hard overhand right but Burgin took it without flinching. Two judges scored it 40-36 while the third had it 39-37, all for Burgin. The kid has a bright future but it is inevitable that someone will capitalize on his deficiency if it isn’t corrected.

Burgin (R.) spearing Jayakody with the jab.

In a highly anticipated match featuring two fighters from the state of New Jersey, Trenton’s Alando Swain (5 wins – 2 losses – 0 draws – 1ko) met Ismael Garcia (4 wins – 0 losses – 0 draws – 1 ko) of Millville in a scheduled six-rounder. The 32-year-old Swain, born and raised in North Carolina, is married with four children—three daughters ages 8, 7, 2 and a one-year-old son. Boxing is his second gig as he holds down a full-time job as a bricklayer in the Local One union.

Swain attacked at the opening bell backing up the taller Garcia who countered with jabs. The bald-pated fighter from Trenton took the opening stanza by pressing the action and attacking the body. Garcia suffered a slight cut over his left eye from an accidental head-butt. The next two rounds were close with Swain pressing the action and Garcia keeping his distance jabbing and throwing the occasional straight right laced with Nyquil. Garcia was losing the fourth round being outthustled by the busy bricklayer when his dreaded

straight right found its mark, crashing on the side of Swain's dome, sending him to the canvas with four seconds remaining in the round. Swain made it to his feet as referee Smoger reached the count of three. He made it out of the round and headed back to his corner.

The action continued in the fifth round with Swain unabashed by the knockdown still stepping on the gas moving forward throwing with reckless abandon. Garcia circled, judiciously jabbing, looking to hit pay dirt a second time. The Trenton resident got careless and was hit with another counter right hand that buckled his legs forcing him to clutch his foe. Swain understood the gravity of the situation and landed a well-placed punch to the reproductive region of the attacking pugilist to disrupt his onslaught and gain a well-needed respite from attack. One may disagree with Swain's tactic, but it worked as it disrupted Garcia's momentum forcing him to complain to Smoger who was on the blind side and missed the infraction.

The sixth and final round was similar to the fourth as Swain was in command marching forward and whacking away at Garcia's body. With less than a minute in the round, Swain cornered his opponent and was about to unload when he was interrupted by



another straight right hand. The punch collided with Swain's head forcing him to both knees in Garcia's corner, facing the turnbuckle as though he was having a pre-fight prayer. He was hurt, but rose instinctively at the count of four. However, he was in no shape to continue as Smoger called a halt to the bout at 2:22.

Garcia (R.) unleashing on Swain.

Similar to Jason Sosa, Philadelphia heavyweight Dante "Mr. Snuggly Time" Selby (0 wins – 0 losses – 1 draw) didn't waste much time learning how to prance around the ring scoring points with the white surface of the gloves in the amateur ranks. The 22-year-old Selby bypassed the amateur rites of passage and had his first professional fight on April 26th at the National Guard Armory in Philadelphia. I thought he won his debut but was overruled by two of the judges who scored it a draw. I took comfort that the third judge was in agreement and scored a shut-out for Selby.

There is no question that Selby will learn on the job and develop into a formidable fighter. He has all the physical tools and willingness to listen and learn. Most important, he is humble, always open to constructive criticism unlike a sizeable percentage of young

professional boxers whose egos are so fragile that anyone who isn't showering them with adulation is automatically labeled a "hater." I am notorious for telling the Emperor that he is naked. Besides, I can beat most of these narcissists without removing my suit and suspenders. But, the pen is mightier than the sword. Selby fought debuting southpaw Dan Pasciolla of Brick, New Jersey in an entertaining four-rounder. Selby pressed the action



Selby (R.) on the attack.

and Pasciolla was more than willing to engage the young heavyweight as the rounds were close. But Selby managed to distinguish himself by landing the harder punches as the pace had both men tired and welcoming the final bell. One judge had it 40-36, a shutout, while the other two had it 39-37, all for Selby.

Many patrons come to a boxing show primarily to see knockouts. And Philadelphia lightweight prospect Sultahn "Showtime" Staton (1 win – 0 losses – 0 draws – 1 ko) did not disappoint in the second bout of the night against Atlantic City's Sidell Blocker (1 win – 5 losses – 1 draw – 0 kos). The tall rangy Blocker attacked the slick boxing Staton early, firing his jab fast and frequently. Staton used good head movement and countered effectively with left hooks and straight rights. It was evident that Staton has good boxing skills, but like so many former amateur standouts, he slaps with the majority of his



Blocker (L.) is out and on his way to the canvas.

punches, rarely ever delivering them with maximum force. An accidental clash of heads opened a cut over Staton's left eye leaving him furious, complaining to referee Vera. Blocker never wavered from his attack and continued pressing the action despite a sizeable reach advantage.

With barely a second remaining in the round, Blocker walked into an overhand right thrown perfectly by Staton that landed squarely on his chin. The tall, rangy fighter collapsed to the canvas to get some shut-eye as referee Vera signaled the end while at the same time calling the ringside doctor. Blocker was helped to a stool as ring announcer Tornambe declared Staton the winner by knockout at 2:59 of the opening round of the scheduled four-rounder. Staton has a bright future, but someone should teach him how to punch correctly before he breaks his wrists while slapping.

I don't know if I was able to draw a correlation between another exciting night of boxing and *Blazing Saddles*. I am not sure that when Stephen Foster wrote his minstrel ditty *De Camptown Races* back in 1850 that he could have envisioned it would be used 124 years later as an integral part of a hit movie or as the opening paragraph of an exciting account of pugilism held in a casino. What is the moral of this story? There is no lesson or message to impart besides:

I went down South with my hat caved in,
Doo-da, doo-da
I came back North with a pocket full of tin
Oh, de doo-da day

Please make sure you watch the movie and email me with your thoughts. Lastly, check out photographs from this and other shows at www.christoneyphotography.com.

Continue to support the sweet science, and remember, always carry your mouthpiece!

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