

The Mouthpiece

*Gimme Di Weed—Ellis and Luckey Smoking!
McCline Decisions Castillo*

By: George Hanson Jr., Esq.

Date: Saturday, March 31, 2012
Venue: Hamilton Manor, Hamilton, New Jersey
Promoter: Nedal's Promotions & Kea Boxing
Ring Announcer: Larry Tornambe
Referees: Earl Morton & Sam Viruet
Photos: www.christoneyphotography.com

A hundred years from now someone will be reading this article, wondering whether or not I was advocating the legalization of marijuana, which is now as legal as azaleas and



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(L-R) Ellis and Hanson

chrysanthemums. Yes, I share the late great reggae superstar Peter Tosh's mantra *Legalize It* and don't criticize it! I don't mean to digress but I must say, "God bless America and the First Amendment." Without the freedom of speech coupled with the internet, my iconoclastic style of arranging words would not be tolerated by the stodgy, hierarchical world of print media with journalists wearing Dockers following a tried and proved format for laying out stories. Miles Davis, playing with his back to the audience, has always been a hero. Like Miles, I "perform" with my rear to the crowd writing what I feel because of my passion and respect for the art that I cannot live without—my oxygen. Thus, I supplanted the main event with a four-rounder as the headline and focus of my story. Yes, God bless America, Miles and the internet too!

If it is the year 2112 and you are reading this article I want you to know that the heart of boxing is rooted in club shows—where young men and women risk permanent injury for \$ 800 - \$1,000 in four-rounders. I want you to know that in 2012 marijuana was illegal in the state of New Jersey. However, despite the ban I watched as trainer Reverend Elvin Thompson and assistant Frank Conto escorted 138 lbs. of the intoxicating stuff into the ring in the personification of Philadelphia junior-welterweight —Ramon "Little Weed" Ellis (2 wins – 7 losses – 1 draw – 1 ko)—for the opening bout, a four-rounder against Tyrone Luckey (4 wins – 1 loss – 0 draws – 4 kos) of Middletown, New Jersey. Ellis, a college student enrolled in the culinary program at The Art Institute of Philadelphia, is as ferocious as he is quiet. A humble affable soul he is always willing to swap punches with anyone. I watched him for the past three weeks sparring with NABF lightweight champion and world rated contender Hammerin' Hank Lundy in preparation for his defense against "Dangerous" Dannie Williams. Lundy was spectacular in winning a

unanimous ten-round decision last night on ESPN's *Friday Night Fights*. Those sparring sessions were so heated and intense I knew that like Dannie, Tyrone wasn't going to be too lucky.

I would wager that Luckey's handlers looked at Ellis's dossier and immediately took the fight. But, there is an old adage in boxing, "records don't beat you, fighters do." And, the free agent Ellis could easily have been 7-2 had he secured the services of a promoter. Luckey, tall and thin, is a dead ringer for former light-heavyweight champion John Conteh. A classic boxer with deceptive punching power, he works full-time at a hospital in patient transfer. So please get ready for all the one-liners that were going through my head during my pre-fight interviews with both pugilists.

No one could have expected what transpired as Ellis and Luckey waged a memorably epic four-round war that had to be the most action-packed 12 minutes of boxing that I have ever witnessed. Luckey came out early and captured the first two stanzas having Ellis in dire straits in the second round after short-circuiting his equilibrium with a vicious left hook that caught the Philly fighter high on the temple. Ellis was discombobulated as Luckey attacked ready for the kill, unloading from his arsenal with combinations. Hurt but never dissuaded Ellis crouched low like it was pre-1990 and he was trying to crawl under the Berlin Wall in East Germany to freedom as punches



whistled over his head. You sensed that at any moment referee Morton was going to step in and end the action but Ellis was dodging most of Luckey's punches and rallied brilliantly in the last fifteen seconds of the round to turn the tides.

Luckey (R.) landing an uppercut.

The final two rounds had the audience on the edge of their seats as Ellis took charge driving hard body shots to Luckey who seemed to have "shot his load" after enthusiastically trying to score an early knockout. Ellis was cooking and his pugilistic stew reached its boiling point in the final round as he dominated —pinning his opponent to the ropes, looking like a miniature Joe Frazier working at a feverish pace in attempt to send Luckey unconscious to the hospital. To his credit, Luckey stood his ground, punching, clutching trying to keep Ellis at bay. When the final bell sounded the crowd cheered raucously in appreciation until the decision was announced. It was a majority draw as two judges scored it even 38-38, reflecting press row's score, with the final having it 39-37 for Luckey.

Heavyweight Jameel "Big Time" McCline's team bought his way into the main event after the headliner, undefeated super-middleweight Derrick Webster, was sidelined for unconfirmed reasons. I heard that McCline's match against Ecuadorian heavyweight

journeyman Livin Castillo (16 wins – 11 losses – 0 draws – 10 kos) was a paid bout—a common practice in professional boxing where a boxer’s promoter or manager pays the entire cost (both purses) of a bout plus a facilitation fee in order to have him on a card. It is done most times to keep a prospect or rising contender active or to gain exposure. The forty-one year old McCline is neither a prospect nor a promising contender climbing the ranks of title contention. Having lost in three attempts to win a version of the heavyweight title he is at the tail-end of his career. Since 2007 McCline (40 wins – 11 losses – 3 draws – 24 kos) has won only two of seven bouts dropping an eight-round majority decision on February 3rd to Harold Sconiers who has a losing record. Maybe this explains why someone on McCline’s team had to pony up some cash to get him a match.

After watching McCline, and Castillo, simulate boxing for eight uneventful rounds, payment should have been extended to the audience for having to suffer through thirty-two minutes of boredom. I would rather have spent an entire day in a commercial hatchery watching chicken sexing—the method of distinguishing the sex of chickens and other hatchlings—than to have labored through a match that should have been recorded and sold as the cure for insomnia. The highlight of the bout was the 6 feet 6 inches, 270 pounds McCline’s entrance punctuated by him stepping over the top ropes effortlessly as he entered the squared circle to face his foe— seven inches shorter and 60 pound lighter. For eight rounds McCline plodded forward as the southpaw Castillo showboated



Castillo (L.) landing the straight left on McCline.

oftentimes taunting him and walking around the ring hands akimbo like he was on a spring stroll through Central Park. The audience booed throughout the bout and cheered when it concluded. McCline was awarded a majority decision by scores of 77-74, 76-75 with the dissenting judge scoring it 77-74 for Castillo.

In the co-main event Polish middleweight Pryzemyslaw Opalach (9 wins – 0 losses – 0 draws – 8 kos) US debut proved that a house built on sand will eventually collapse. Having faced nine cannon fodder (two of them winless) with a combined record of 25 wins – 61 losses – 2 draws the Polish pugilist wasn’t prepared for the relentless pressure of Eberto “Tito” Medina (5 wins – 7 losses – 1 draw – 1 ko) of Newark, New Jersey by way of Ecuador. Medina was all over Opalach like a cheap leisure suit forcing him to fight at a pace and tempo that wasn’t to his liking. Round after round the Ecuadorian found a home for his straight right that couldn’t miss Oplalach’s chin. It didn’t matter that the Polish contingent cheered in unison for their countryman. He was on an island

inhabited by his tormentor and their voices only infuriated Medina causing him to dole out more punishment. Two judges got it correct scoring it 60-54 while the third had it 59-55 all for Medina. Records don't beat you, fighters do!

In an entertaining display of pugilism junior-featherweight Nydia “Da Phenominal” Feliciano (4 wins – 2 losses – 3 draws – 0 kos) of Bronx, New York used her experience and ring guile to outbox debuting Mikayla Nebal of Ohio in a four-rounder—winning a unanimous decision 40-36 on all three scorecards. A lean mean fighting machine, the baby-faced Feliciano worked behind the jab using her speed and accuracy, landing to the



body and head of a plodding Nebal who came forward undeterred by the scoring blows. It was Nebal who was the stronger fighter on the inside pinning her nemesis to the ropes in the final round and landing well to the body in a stanza that should have been scored for her. It was non-stop action for four exciting rounds as the veteran proved a little bit too much for the debutante.

Feliciano (R.) unloading on Nebal.

Trenton, New Jersey middleweight Alando Swain (4 wins – 1 losses – 0 draws – 1 ko) won a unanimous four-round decision by scores of 40-36 twice and 39-37 over Eddie Edmonds (2 wins – 1 loss – 2 draws – 1 ko) of Newark, New Jersey. It wasn't an aesthetically pleasing bout as it was marred with plenty of holding by Edmonds who didn't seem to have an answer for Swain's body punching and constant pressure. However, it was fantastic in comparison to the McCline fiasco that had me contemplating hurling myself into the ring to destroy the monotony.

Knockouts are as inevitable to the sweet science as dancing is to the playing of music. It was a short tango between junior-welterweight Jose “Baby Boy” Calderon (3 wins – 1 loss – 0 draws – 3 kos) of Fajardo, Puerto Rico and Jason Sia (0 wins – 4 losses – 0 draws) of Philadelphia. The twenty-year old Calderon, the younger brother of former WBO straw-weight and junior flyweight champion Ivan “Iron Boy” Calderon, needed just two minutes and forty-nine seconds of the opening round of the scheduled four-rounder to bring a halt to the encounter.

The southpaw Sia attacked at the bell and seemed to be having some success as Calderon parried while waiting like a cobra to strike a deadly blow. He took advantage of a lingering right jab by Sia exploding a devastating left hook that left the audience speechless and the Philly fighter hapless on his back as though he was sun bathing during spring break in Cancun. Sia didn't beat the count and Referee Viruet aided him to the stool as the ringside doctor checked his vitals. Maybe, it is time for Sia to hang up his gloves and use that Criminal Justice degree he earned from Temple University.

Oftentimes it is the undercard that leaves an audience captivated wanting more of the sweet science, as was the case tonight. It was fortuitous that McCline vs. Castillo was the finale of an intriguing night of boxing as the opening bout set the tone. College parties, concerts and now boxing shows are using a proven formula to maximize the entertainment value—a Little Weed!

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

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