

The Mouthpiece

Spartacus—Davis Edges Medina

By: George Hanson Jr., Esq.

Date: Saturday, May 19, 2012
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: Earl Brown & Sam Viruet
Photos: www.christoneyphotography.com

Jamaal “Da Truth” Davis (12 wins – 8 losses – 1 draw – 6 KO’s) is a gladiator. And like the legendary warrior Spartacus, who in 73 B.C. led a slave revolt against the Roman Empire, the junior-middleweight pugilist made his way into the ring; head high, supremely confident. It was as though he was entering the gates of Rome victorious—



flanked by cornerman Brother Naazim Richardson—the conquering hero basking in the adulation of the masses. Trainer Sharron Baker up front parted the crowd, cutman Willie Folk two steps behind as the growing entourage led the Philadelphia fighter regally attired in the most exquisite green and black trunks, robe, and shoes showing his sartorial splendor. If John DiSanto and www.phillyboxinghistory.com added a ring walk category to its annual Briscoe Awards this would be the frontrunner. I don’t know if another fighter has made a more magnificent stroll from the dressing rooms to the squared circle. I sat taking it all in, a prisoner of the moment with the audience, buttressed by his faithful Philadelphia fans, and fellow gladiators from that noble school of fighters in West Philadelphia—The James Shuler Memorial Gym.

Ring walk: Davis and Richardson.

My mind wandered to the scene from the eponymous 1960 epic film starring Kirk Douglas in which Spartacus and his army are about to engage the Romans on the battlefield as Davis climbed through the center strands. He stood in the middle of the ring— ready— a picture of supreme confidence oiled for combat. Adrenaline pumping, I was tempted to hop up on the press row table and deliver a few of Douglas’ lines: “When a free man dies, he loses the pleasure of life. A slave loses his pain. Death is the only freedom a slave knows. That’s why he’s not afraid of it. That’s why we’ll win.”

The gong sounded and Davis boxed brilliantly behind a stiff jab, using angles while dropping a piercing right hand to Eberto Medina's left side in the opening stanza of the scheduled eight-rounder similar to their first encounter on July 15, 2011— or as Yogi Berra would say, “déjà vu all over again!” Medina (6 wins – 7 losses – 1 draw – 1 KO) of Newark, New Jersey by way of Ecuador, came forward but was out boxed seeming one step behind Davis who was a gloved matador toying with a marauding bull sidestepping checking him with hooks instead of a red cape.

Nothing lasts forever as Medina staggered Davis early in the second round with a straight right and was able to get closer to the Philly fighter who stayed on his bicycle. Medina took the next two rounds hurting Davis again in the third stanza with a left hook followed by another right. The Ecuadorian found a home for the right hand as Davis' left eye was swelling and blood painted his brow in the fourth round. Press row had Medina ahead after four rounds and you could feel the consternation in the air as the sun seem to be going down on the once-promising career of Davis.

But, Davis is a gladiator who won't wane in the face of adversity. The man who never lost hope and fought to the end as his late wife battled breast cancer. It is his “never say die” spirit that has made him a fan favorite. It is the reason why his sparring partners and gym members follow him into battle with the ropes and boxing commissions keeping them out of the ring and in their seats. Davis wasn't ready to sink like the Titanic as he found his sea legs and resumed fighting from a distance and took the fifth round with some nifty boxing. The next two rounds were close but Davis had the edge, delivering combinations, disappearing, not allowing Medina to land his vaunted right hand. He closed the show by standing toe-to-toe with Medina in the center of the ring both



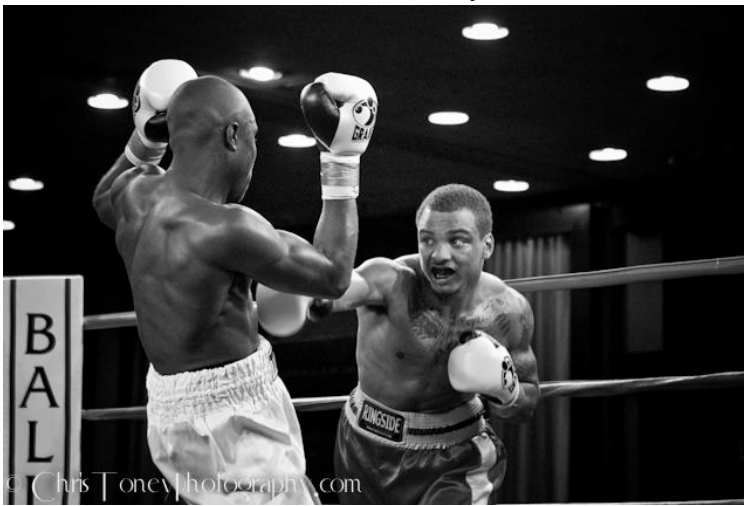
attempting to send the other out of the arena on a stretcher. The crowd cheered raucously as Davis dislodged Medina's mouthpiece with a sizzling left hook gaining an advantage and mental edge. He needed the last round and he won it in the traditional fashion of Philadelphia fighters—trench warfare. One judge scored it a draw 76-76 and was overruled by the other two who had it identical 77-75 for Davis.

Davis (L.) using the jab early.

I remembered David Gonzalez from his amateur days when as a 16-year-old he knocked out eight of his first ten opponents. It was Gonzalez who in 2006 caused an amateur show at Shepard Recreation Center in West Philadelphia to be delayed for nearly an hour. A

Gonzalez straight right sent his opponent to the canvas unconscious for several minutes as the ringside doctor and emergency medical technicians worked feverishly to revive the young man who recovered and had to be taken to the hospital. Yes, Gonzalez was revered and feared for the Nyquil in his gloves. I hadn't seen him since 2007 when Ramon "Little Weed" Ellis fearless and seven years older handed him his first loss on another show at the same venue. Gonzalez hit Ellis with his money shot but the granite chin fighter never took a backwards step and swarmed all over his younger opponent and captured the decision proving that there is a huge difference between a teenager and a grown man.

It was good seeing Gonzalez in the dressing room getting ready for his professional debut. He told me that he had taken a year off abandoning the amateur ranks with 18 wins 3 losses and 12 knockouts and was now training at the Lonnie Young Recreation Center in the Germantown section of the city under the watchful eye of trainer Kevin Carmody.



Gonzalez (R.) attacking Pritchett.

I wasn't surprised that Gonzalez was squaring off against three-fight veteran junior welterweight, Korey Pritchett (2 wins – 1 loss – 0 draws – 0 KO's) of Camden, New Jersey in a scheduled four-rounder. Despite the edge in experience, the tall, unorthodox, fearless 25-year-old Pritchett would be a good barometer for the 22-year-old Gonzalez.

There weren't any fireworks or blistering knockdowns. However, Gonzalez was impressive in his debut capturing the first three rounds by going to the body, outworking Pritchett and landing the crisper punches. The rounds were close but you had to score them for the debuting pugilist. Pritchett's experience and stamina allowed him to take the final round as Gonzalez was fading but was savvy enough to throw short combinations and hold to gain much needed time to catch his breath. There is no doubt that Gonzalez is going to do well in the professional ranks as he captured a unanimous decision 39-37 on all three scorecards.

"I got short arms. I am a one-trick pony. I am going to get in chest and see what he gives" stated light-heavyweight Billy Bailey in response to my pre-fight interview questions regarding his scheduled eight-rounder against Chuck "The Professor" Mussachio of Wildwood, New Jersey. Bailey who is employed by the street department in his hometown of Bakersfield, California fixing potholes reminds me of former heavyweight contender Randall "Tex" Cobb. Like the affable Cobb, he is fearless, tough, brutally honest and instantly likeable. You could put a silverback gorilla in the ring with Bailey (11 wins – 14 losses – 0 draws – 4 KO's) and it would be a competitive battle because the Californian never saw a fight that he didn't believe he could win.

Mussachio, his first fight since his unsuccessful bid last November to wrest the USBA cruiserweight title from Garrett “The Ultimate Warrior” Wilson, was moving back to his natural weight division. Ahead on all scorecards going into the 12th and final round of that memorable match, forty-one seconds later Mussachio found himself out on the canvas. The relentless Wilson knowing that he needed a knockout to retain his coveted title, slipped a picture-perfect overhand right past Mussachio’s jab to close the show. The Professor decided to move back to the comfort of the light-heavyweight division where he enjoys a sizable height and reach advantage over his opponents without conceding much in power.

You don’t have to look for Bailey because he blankets his opponents like a cheap leisure suit. The bell rang and he immediately began to close the distance as Mussachio (17 wins – 2 losses – 2 draws – 5 KO’s) used his jab to keep him at bay. Bailey was living up to his pre-fight promise of testing the mettle of his adversary. He pressed on as the Professor, Mussachio, gave a boxing lesson in the art of jabbing and countering in taking the opening round. In the second round Bailey walked into a straight right that sent him to the canvas. He rose immediately before referee Viruet could reach the count of three and finished the round by resuming his forward march. The fight followed a pattern



similar to the opening stanza with Bailey attacking and Mussachio boxing from long distance. The Californian had his moments and made it an entertaining fight by never taking a backwards step. He probably captured two of the middle rounds, which were close. However, Mussachio used his length and boxing skills to control the action with his long jab winning a well-deserved unanimous decision by scores of 79-72 and 78-73 twice.

Mussachio (R.) getting ready to deliver the right.

In the shocker of the night super-middleweight Robert Yong (4 wins – 4 losses – 1 draw – 3 KO’s) of Phoenix, Arizona spoiled the perfect record of Philadelphia pugilist Fred Jenkins Jr. (5 wins – 0 losses – 0 draws – 2 KO’s) in their scheduled six-rounder. The taller Yong dominated the opening round with a stiff jab that repeatedly found its mark, as the usually slick-boxing Jenkins didn’t seem to have an answer. Right before the bell sounded to end the round, Yong landed a blistering right that had the Philadelphian wobbling like a buoy at sea after a passing wave. Jenkins was hurt but made it back to the corner for the one minute respite and instructions from his father and trainer—Fred Jenkins Sr.

Jenkins recovered and had a better second round even though Yong controlled most of the action with his jab and athleticism. Nevertheless, Jenkins was able to land a good right. However, the tide turned again when Yong dropped him midway in the third stanza with a short left hook followed by a straight right. Rising before referee Brown could toll the count of five with his father yelling, “Grab him Fred,” Jenkins followed instructions and survived. An apparent knockdown at the bell was called a slip by the referee. With his corner working feverishly, Jenkins made it out for the fourth round. He was doing well and it appeared that he had cleared much of the cobwebs and would turn the tide.



Yong (R.) backing up Jenkins.

But, lightning struck again as Yong dropped him with a right at the bell to conclude the round. Wisely the ringside doctor made it over to his corner and decided that he was in no shape to answer the bell for the fifth round. Yong was declared the winner by technical knockout at 3:00 of round four—an upset and the first setback for Jenkins.

Other Results: In a scheduled four-rounder, southpaw welterweight **Ibrihim Shabazz (0 wins – 1 loss – 1 draw)** of Newark, New Jersey boxed niftily behind his right jab using impeccable lateral movement to befuddle his opponent **Miguel Corcino (3 wins – 2 losses – 0 draws – 2 KO’s)** of Camden, New Jersey. Shabazz dictated the pace, as Corcino had no solution for the conundrum of the slicker and faster southpaw.



It was as though Corcino or his corner didn’t know that the fighter was facing a southpaw. Shabazz hurt Corcino in the third and fourth rounds with him hanging on until the final bell. The Newark fighter captured an impressive unanimous decision by scores

of 40-36 and 39-37 twice. In the all Philadelphia match-up, light-heavyweight **Todd “2 Gunz” Unthank-May (3 wins – 0 losses – 0 draws – 2 KO’s)** notched his fourth win by dominating tough **Louis Robinson (2 wins – 4 losses – 1 draw – 1 KO)** dropping him in the final round winning a unanimous four-round decision by scores of 40-34 and 40-35 twice.



Junior-welterweight **Justin Johnson (2 wins – 3 losses – 3 draws – 0 KO’s)** of Clarion, Pennsylvania captured a close four-round split-decision over **Korey Sloane (2 wins – 3 losses – 1 draw – 0 KO’s)** of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It was an entertaining bout with the shorter Johnson pressing the action and landing the more effective punches in winning 39-37 on two of the judges’ scorecards with the third having the same score for Sloane.

It was another exciting night of the sweet science as the capacity crowd enjoyed the action. We are not so far removed from the days of Spartacus as we still honor our gladiators with our cheers and adulation. It was raucous as Jamaal Davis pulled out another victory by any means necessary. It wasn’t a graceful display of the sweet science. But nevertheless, it was effective as Davis hustled in the latter part of the fight, jabbing, tying up and even landing a few well-placed “accidental” low blows to pull out the rounds and closed in glorious fashion by standing his ground and banging toe-to-toe with Medina until the final bell. It was a gritty episode of pugilism by two fearless combatants hell-bent on winning.

I would be remiss if I didn’t recognize and honor the 87th birthday of a famous “fighter” and gladiator for equality. It is May 19th. Happy Birthday Malcolm.

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

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