

The Mouthpiece

The First Kut is the Deepest – Vinan Upsets Vasquez

By: George Hanson Jr., Esq.

Date: Friday, February 26, 2010
Venue: The Arena, Philadelphia, PA
Promoter: Andre Kut, KEA Boxing Promotions (www.kea-boxing.com)
Matchmaker: Nick Tiberi
Ring Announcer: Henry Hascup
Referees: Blair Talmadge & Eddie Cotton

They say that the first cut is the deepest. Last night, promoter Andre Kut pulled his chair up to the promotional table and “kut” a warm succulent slice of the Philly boxing pie as fans packed The Arena for an inaugural 8-bout card. At Tuesday’s press conference on South Street, Kut was passionate in sharing the impetus for his foray into the hotbed of boxing—Philadelphia. The Andover, New Jersey resident stated that he wanted to



Vasquez (L) moving in (Picture: courtesy of Merrick Foster)

provide “action-packed boxing shows with a touch of class.” However, he reiterated that it was more important to work with young fighters who have character than those who were major ticket sellers, but lacked moral fiber. Equally significant, he would use these shows as a platform to sign local talent. Who said there wasn’t room for another boxing promoter in the City of Brotherly Love?

In the six-round main event, fan favorite, lightweight Victor Vasquez (11 wins – 3 losses – 0 draws – 6 kos) of Philadelphia lost by a split decision to spoiler Carlos Vinan (8 wins – 8 losses – 3 draws – 1 ko) from Newark, New Jersey by way of Ecuador. One judge had it 60-54 for Vasquez while the other two had it for Vinan 59-55 and 58-56, the same as my scorecard. Many have forgotten that it was Vinan who handed 2004 Olympic alternate Eric “Outlaw” Hunter his first and only defeat on January 1, 2007 in the same building.

It is inevitable that you will find a few staunch Vasquez supporters who react by saying, “Victor was robbed!” Roy Jones was robbed at the 1988 Olympics, Dave Tiberi was robbed in his 1992 match against middleweight champion James Toney, Meldrick Taylor was robbed in his match against Julio Cesar Chavez— Victor Vasquez lost!

Human nature is to look in the mirror when all goes well, to take credit, and to look out the window to find someone or something to blame when things go wrong. Thus, Vasquez and his handlers will miss the point if they follow natural instincts and listen to the sycophants who don't want to "tell the emperor that he is naked." The facts are quite simple, Vasquez was outworked by an overblown featherweight steeped in the art of dirty fighting—a magna cum laude graduate of the Bennie Briscoe/Bernard Hopkins University of Pugilism. Round after round Vinan would get on the inside; hold Vasquez with one hand while whacking away at his kidneys and the back of his head, out of referee Talmadge's view. Dirty, yes, but effective.

I do not endorse complaining to the referee. In the ring you must subscribe to the Old Testament, "an eye for an eye." I never whined to a referee or fighter about an infraction during a career consisting of over 100 amateur fights or sparring sessions. If you hit me low, on the break or with an elbow, accidental or not, I was going to make sure that you were compensated for the infraction. If you broke the rules, my philosophy was "vengeance is mine"—Romans 12:19.

Vasquez complained but never retaliated and had no answer for the more peripatetic Vinan who implemented his game plan. True, all of the rounds were identical and close but Vinan was the aggressor throwing punches, not caring where they landed. Vasquez scored with a few good right hands but he never orchestrated and executed a series of



Vinan (L) going to work (Picture: courtesy of Merrick Foster)

punches. Instead of keeping Vinan at bay with a strong jab and using a right uppercut to "pick him up" when he was within range, Vasquez was stoic, waiting thus allowing his smaller opponent to get on the inside and break all the rules. In colloquial terms, "this is how Vinan gets down:" He is a cagey veteran, possessing plenty of heart, and knows how to get his adversary out of rhythm by any means necessary.

If you let a mongoose in the chicken coop and he kills all the feathered residents, don't blame Frank Perdue. Blame yourself! Baseball home run king, Hank Aaron, and fans who believed steroid user Mark McGuire were robbed, Al Gore was robbed in the 2000 elections, investors duped by Bernie Madoff's Ponzi scheme were robbed—Victor Vasquez was out-hustled! Can you dig it!

In the fight of the night, a well-fought chess match involved hot, lightweight prospect Angel Ocasio (1 win – 0 losses – 0 draws – 0 kos) of Philadelphia out-dueling Osnel Charles (1 win – 1 loss – 0 draws – 0 kos) of Atlantic City, New Jersey by way of Haiti.

Ocasio dropped the slick boxing Charles in the second round on his way to a unanimous four-round decision by scores of 39-36 twice and 38-37.

The confident and jovial Charles, a barber by trade, entered the ring resplendent in the colors of the Haitian flag with the names of his 5-year-old daughter, Kyla, and his 3-year-old son, Osnel Jr., emblazoned on the front of his trunks. The twenty-year-old Ocasio, who works for a court reporting firm and is trained by his father, mounted the ring apron decked out in black, ready to go to work. Watching them box in the opening round was like witnessing two bantam roosters engaging in combat. The artistry and movement was astounding as both fighters worked behind stiff jabs and combinations. Ocasio, 5-feet-5-inches gave away three inches in height but was just as effective with a nice stiff jab followed by his body attack. It was a close opening round but the edge went to Ocasio who landed more body punches.

About a minute into the second round, Ocasio launched a well-timed crushing right hand over Charles's jab that crashed off the Haitian's jaw sending him to the canvas. Up quickly before the count could reach five, Charles hopped on his bicycle, using good lateral movement to make it through the round. The indefatigable Charles captured the third round on my scorecard by pressing the action with good jabs and occasionally scoring with the straight right. At the opening of the final round Charles showboated by dropping his hands and jumping up as a signal that he was ready to rumble. Ocasio, kept his composure, listened to his corner and went back to working the body and capturing



Ocasio (L) faces Charles (Picture: courtesy of Merrick Foster)

the round. The crowd showed its appreciation by applauding at the conclusion of this entertaining well-fought bout. Both fighters are talented beyond their experience. Ocasio is going to be a star in this division. Let's hope that a promoter signs Charles and gets his career on track because he has all the right attributes to go far.

Debuting junior featherweight Anthony Yoder, from Vineland, New Jersey won a unanimous four-round decision by scores of 40-36 twice and 39-37 over tough Francisco Portillo (0 wins – 1 loss – 0 draws) of West Virginia. The shorter Portillo came out of the gate slugging, landing uppercuts from all angles. The lanky Yoder had no answer for Portillo's right hand which he would without hesitation turn into an uppercut that landed with so much frequency in Round 1 and 2. You knew that if Portillo was a puncher the fight would have been over. I gave Portillo both rounds.

Yoder, sporting high-top Jordan boxing shoes, seemed like a car stuck in Mississippi mud as he came forward being held back by the heavy monstrosities tied to his feet, the worst boxing shoes ever produced. Why fighters waste their money on such hideous footwear is mystifying. Anyway, with Portillo tiring, Yoder barely took the last two rounds. I had the fight even. If Portillo had a punch, the fight would not have gone the distance.

I cannot recall ever seeing a bad women's match and tonight was no different. In a scheduled four-round featherweight match, Elizabeth Sherman (1 win – 0 losses – 0 draws – 0 kos) of Raritan, New Jersey won a unanimous decision by scores of 40-36 on all three scorecards over Karen Dulin (1 win – 4 losses – 0 draws – 1 ko) of Mystic, Connecticut. The tall, slender Sherman, a certified fitness instructor, made the ring walk with trainer Joey "Eye" Intriери, nine-time Pennsylvania Cutman of the Year, in tow. She had a relaxed air of confidence about her. Dulin, beautiful, smoky eyes, chiseled features,



Sherman (L) jabbing Dulin (Picture: courtesy of Merrick Foster)

holds a black belt in karate and looks more like she belongs in *Vogue* instead of the squared circle. With a sense for fashion she looked the part, her hair braided with a tight leopard print outfit hugging the contours of her supple frame. Even though they were both the same weight, Dulin has the body of a 100 meter track star and appeared much bigger than her opponent.

Forget the pugilistic foreplay. Sherman came out on the attack behind her jab as Dulin circled while jabbing. As is becoming the norm, there is no such thing as a feeling out round for the ladies. Sherman attacked with punches from all angles and Dulin fought back throwing her right and hooks. The rounds mirrored each other with Sherman the busier fighter coming forward, constantly punching. In a show of sportsmanship, Dulin applauded when the decision was announced.

Light-heavyweight prospect Lavarn "Baby Bowe" Harvell (4 wins – 0 losses – 0 draws – 1 ko) of Atlantic City, New Jersey, a dead ringer for former heavyweight champion Riddick Bowe, made short work of Randy "The Rattler" Campbell (3 wins – 0 losses – 0 draws – 2 kos) of Bowerston, Ohio stopping him at 1:52 of the opening stanza. Harvell dropped Campbell, who bears a striking resemblance to the late John Lennon, with a right hand and never allowed him to recuperate, raining punches relentlessly, forcing referee Talmadge to waive him off. This was an impressive outing for the twenty-one-year-old Harvell who has a bright future.

Other results: Amateur standout, heavyweight **Bryant Jennings** of Philadelphia made the transition to the punch-for-pay ranks, winning his debut, a unanimous four-round decision by scores of 40-36 on all scorecards over well-traveled veteran **Zeferino Albino** (3 wins – 9 losses – 2 draws – 1 ko) of Philadelphia. Jennings pressed the action throughout, working the head and body but Albino came to fight and fought off the ropes whenever cornered. Jennings has an uncanny ability to avoid punches by taking deep knee bends reminding me of Philly middleweight Willie “The Rock” Harris, who would do squats all the way to the floor by bending his knees to avoid punches.

Debuting lightweight **Kareem “Cool Breeze” Cooley** of Philadelphia introduced the unorthodox **Sidell Blocker** (0 wins – 1 loss – 0 draws) of Pleasantville, New Jersey to the canvas in Round 3. Amazingly, Blocker flipped from his back to a standing position then made his way to the adjacent corner, took a knee and quit at 1:12 of the round. If this was during the days of Francis Walker, Executive Secretary of the Pennsylvania Athletic Commission, Blocker would not have been paid for his services because he gave up without just cause. As a youngster I have been in the dressing room on a few occasions when Mr. Walker denied payment to fighters who took artistic liberty and flopped like Hollywood stuntmen landing on the canvas from phantom punches.

Juan “The Beast” Rodriguez (1 win – 0 losses – 0 draws – 1 ko) of Union City, New Jersey dropped the ever so awkward **Dontre King** (1 win – 5 losses – 1 draw – 0 kos) of Cumberland, Maryland to one knee with an uppercut in the third round on his way to a unanimous four-round decision, 40-35 on all scorecards. King was game and winged punches from all angles. The southpaw Rodriguez had better technique and was committed to body punching.

It was an entertaining night of the sweet science in Philadelphia. To further involve the fans, on every seat was a colorful scorecard with all the bouts and instruction on how to score a professional boxing match. Throughout the night I heard fans behind press row debating on how they saw each round. No surprise the main event did not garner consensus. Supporting Kut’s entrée were several notable members of the boxing community including, Roland “Two Gun” Cooley, Brian McGinley, Marvin “Machine Gun” Garris, boxing judge, Jeannie Williams, Greg Robinson, Percy “Buster” Custus, Harry Joe Yorgey, Joey Dawejko, Clement “Strictly Business” Bethea, Kamarah “Black Magic” Pasley, Ardrick Butler, Tyrone Crawley Jr. and Simon “Punchline” Carr.

KEA Promotions will be back at The Arena on April 30, 2010 for a second “kut’ with another action-packed card.

Please make a donation to the Haitian Relief Fund at www.redcross.org. Continue to support the sweet science, and remember, always carry your mouthpiece!

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