

The Mouthpiece

Three Blind Mice—Lara Gets Robbed Suavecito Stops Shimoda

By: George Hanson Jr., Esq.

Date: Saturday, July 9, 2011
Venue: Boardwalk Hall—Atlantic City, New Jersey
Promoters: Goosen Tutor & Golden Boy
Coverage: HBO's *Boxing After Dark*
Commentators: Bob Papa, Roy Jones Jr., Max Kellerman & Harold Lederman
Ring Announcers: Joe Antonacci
Referees: Samuel Viruet, Benjy Esteves Jr., Eddie Cotton & Randy Newman
Pictures: www.christoneyphotography.com

Let me not be the rooster who takes credit for the dawn. However, someone has to comment on the obvious. Oftentimes, professional boxing is the theater of the absurd. Remember Fan Man who used a powered paraglider attempting to sail into the outdoor ring during Round 7 of the rematch between WBA & IBF heavyweight champion Riddick Bowe and Evander Holyfield on November 6, 1993 at Caesar's Palace in Vegas? Once again, another Holyfield fight provided fuel for the tabloids when Mike Tyson bit a sliver from Holyfield's ear in the third round of their June 28, 1997 title fight. Tyson, the challenger, was disqualified and will forever live in infamy. And let's not forget Antonio



Margarito, nabbed with his hands tightly wrapped encased in plaster of paris before his January 2009 bout with Sugar Shane Mosley. I guess Margarito had no idea what his trainer was putting in his hand wraps. If you believe him, you will have to accept that I am an extraterrestrial who landed at Roswell.

Lara (L.) launching the overhand left over Williams' jab.

As absurd as the aforementioned, nothing is more egregious than three officials seated at ringside to score a boxing match and reporting an outcome that is antithetical to what we all saw!

Having witnessed numerous bad decisions, I often wonder if judges are in need of Lasik surgery and whether or not they are visiting Mendocino County, California with unfettered regularity for medicinal purposes. Let me not digress, but “legalize it and let’s not criticize it!” For the past three years, I have mounted my soapbox clamoring for mandatory eye examinations and drug tests for boxing judges. However, like the boy who cried wolf my pleas and proclamations have fallen on the deaf ears of various boxing commissioners or more appropriately, “Little Lords” of their respective pugilistic fiefdoms. But something is gravely wrong when former junior-middleweight champion Paul “The Punisher” Williams is awarded a majority 12-round decision over Erislandy



Lara (R.) working on the inside.

Lara by scores of 116-114, 115-114 and 114-114 after the Cuban had his head bouncing like a bobble-head doll for the majority of the bout. Harold Lederman, HBO’s unofficial ringside scorer, had it 117-111 for Lara. And Lederman is a non-smoker who has 20/20 vision!

I have said countless times that had someone taught the six-feet-two-inch Paul Williams the art of boxing he would have been a combination of Tommy “The Hitman” Hearns and Marvelous Marvin Hagler—a southpaw master boxer with speed, power and a cast iron chin—virtually unbeatable. Williams has all the attributes that cannot be taught: enormous heart, unbreakable spirit, relentless tenacity and stamina. It is unfortunate that trainer George Peterson had the perfect student, but didn’t know what to do. It appears that Peterson couldn’t teach a dog how to bark and all that he knows about boxing can fit on one-side of an index card. Williams’ technical abilities are grossly lacking and he wins because he is fearless, can absorb punishment and overwhelms his opponent with pressure while constantly punching. He is an anomaly—a tall, rangy fighter who relinquishes his physical advantages by plodding forward and fighting on the inside. The boxing police should issue a warrant for Peterson’s arrest and revoke his trainer’s license!

Returning to the ring after his November 20, 2010 second-round knockout loss to WBC middleweight champion Sergio “Maravilla” Martinez, it would have snowed in Jamaica for me to have selected the southpaw Erislandy Lara for Williams’ comeback fight. The southpaw Cuban, Lara, despite a modest record (15 wins – 0 losses – 1 draw – 10 kos) was a 2005 & 2006 World Amateur champion and boasts over 300 victories! It is axiomatic that Cuban fighters are far more experienced than their American counterparts

and are more than ready to accept any challenge. Maybe, Williams' brain trust thought that because Lara fought to a draw with Carlos Molina in March, he wasn't as good as his vaunted amateur accomplishments and the media hype that surrounded him and all his countrymen. Nevertheless, here I was at ringside poised to see how Williams would perform coming off a devastating knockout loss.

With Lara already in the ring waiting patiently and pacing like a Bengal tiger, Paul "The Punisher" Williams (39 wins – 2 losses – 0 draws – 27 kos), decked out in an exquisite orange and white outfit, matching gloves, entourage in tow, made his ring walk with a 1,000 watt smile on his face as the 2009 chart topping single *I Gotta A Feeling* by the Black Eyed Peas blared over the house speakers.

I gotta feeling that tonight's gonna be a good night
That tonight's gonna be a good night
That tonight's gonna be a good, good night

Referee Samuel Viruet went through the formalities, the gong sounded and the Cuban met Williams in the center of the ring and in no time landed a hard right uppercut and straight left that found their mark. The size and height disparities were noticeable as Lara who rehydrated to 160 lbs. was outweighed by 10 pounds while giving up five inches in height. It was the same Paul Williams as he absorbed the shots well and kept advancing, the Martinez's fight clearly being a distant memory. Moving laterally, Lara avoided exchanges preferring to pick his shots from long-range like Vasily Zaytsev, the World War II Russian sniper who killed 225 soldiers including 11 enemy snipers November 10



– December 17, 1942. The southpaw Williams marched forward flicking his right jab and winging punches to the body. But the elusive Lara side-stepped, avoiding punishment while firing like Zaytsev from a distance. This became the basic pattern of the fight.

Lara (L.) connecting with the overhand left on Williams.

A clash of heads in Round 5 caused a cut over Williams' eye and a huge knot on the left side of Lara's head that became larger as the fight progressed making him look like he was midway through a make-up session for a remake of the 1980 film *The Elephant Man*. The damage caused by the head-butt wasn't a factor as Lara continued to pepper Williams from a distance with overhand lefts. In the seventh round I counted five

consecutive overhand lefts that found their mark on Williams' chin. There is no question that Paul Williams has granite in his beard!

The fight raged on at the same pace with Lara slowing down a tad and Williams fighting like his life depended on victory. However, he threw more punches, but landed less than Lara while absorbing power shots. It was a forgone conclusion when the bell sounded and Lara's handlers hoisted him in the air that the dejected looking Williams and his corner would make it back to Aiken, South Carolina contemplating the fighter's retirement. But I had forgotten that this was professional boxing and I should not believe my lying eyes that Lara had won. The rest is history as a cacophony of boos flooded Boardwalk Hall as Williams and his handlers jumped in jubilation like a death row inmate and his family after the announcement of a stay of execution and a new trial.

Rico "Suavecito" Ramos has become to boxing what Calvin Borel is to professional horse-racing—an elite athlete who "rides the rails" making his move at the opportune time, storming from behind to snatch victory from what mere mortals would concede are the jaws of defeat. I sat with anticipation watching the 2009 Kentucky Derby as Borel atop of *Mine That Bird*, a 50-1 longshot, stormed from the back of the pack, positioning the horse along the rail outpacing the competition to cross the finish line first winning by almost seven lengths. I don't know if the 24-year-old Ramos ever visited the horse



stables or tracks while growing up in Pico Rivera, California because he would have made a hell of a jockey. He shares the same athletic DNA with Borel—physically as demonstrated by their stature and similar weight and mentally because of their confidence and undying belief that they will be first to cross the finish line!

Shimoda (R.) pressing the action against Ramos.

Tonight Ramos (19 wins – 0 losses – 0 draws – 10 kos) had to overcome the early lead of WBA super-bantamweight champion southpaw Akifumi "Sugar" Shimoda (23 wins – 2 losses – 1 draw – 10 kos) of Tokyo, Japan. Shimoda, the troubled youth who dropped out of high school to follow his passion for the sweet science, was making his first title defense. He became the 31st WBA super-bantamweight champion when he wrested the belt from his countryman Ryol Li Lee on January 31th via a unanimous 12-round decision. Shimoda took the lead, coming forward, working behind the jab and going downstairs. Ramos seemed somewhat perplexed as he kept his distance circling while

looking for an opening. Round after round Shimoda kept the pressure on, outworking Ramos who appeared to be content probing for an opening. The only blows of significance were two clashes of heads, first in the second round and again in the fifth stanza, opening a cut over the right eye of Ramos.

Behind on all scorecards and the collective mind of the audience, Ramos, like Borel, started to sit down on his punches and make his move in the sixth round. It appeared that Shimoda was beginning to slow down as Ramos caught him with a good right hand. Maybe, it was execution of a divine plan or desperation, but Ramos started to set his eyes on the finish line in Round 7 as he doubled up on his jab and was throwing the right hand. Towards the end of the round, he grazed Shimoda with a right which was followed by a thunderous left hook that caught him square on the side of the jaw crashing him to the canvas, flat on his back like he was sunbathing out on the Atlantic City boardwalk. Miraculously, the fighting man from Japan made it up on spaghetti legs, stumbling forward like he had too much to drink at a New Year's Eve party forcing Referee Estevez to call a halt at 2:46 of Round 7. Overwhelmed by the moment, Ramos could be seen in



his corner with his head on manager Sam Watson's shoulder crying tears of joy. He rode the rails from behind and surged to the finish line with a show-stealing knockout!

Ramos admiring his work.

Ignacio "Nacho" Beristáin, a 2011 International Boxing Hall of Fame inductee, is amongst the greatest boxing trainers in history. Having guided the careers of many Mexican world champions, including the Marquez brothers (Juan Manuel and Rafael), he was here to make sure that WBC featherweight champion Jhonny Gonzalez, executed the fight plan. The hard-punching Gonzalez (48 wins – 7 losses – 0 draws – 42 kos) of Mexico City, Mexico, a former WBO bantamweight champion, was making his first defense of the featherweight belt he won back in April. His opponent Tomas Villa (23 wins – 7 losses – 4 draws – 14 kos) who hails from Chihuahua, Mexico would prove to be cannon fodder for Gonzalez in preparation for a future showdown with the top man in the division—El Ciclón de Guantánamo—WBA & IBF featherweight champion Yuriorkis Gamboa.

From the onset, with Beristáin in his corner, Gonzalez fought strategically keeping his shorter adversary at bay with the jab while continuously smashing him with sweeping left hooks, immediately turning them into uppercuts that repeatedly found their target. It was textbook boxing as Gonzalez stutter-stepped rocking his shoulders from left to right, signature moves of the Hall of Fame trainer's pupils. The champion was a scientist, the



Gonzalez (L.) going to work on Villa!

boxing ring his lab, the gloves his scalpel and Villa played the role of the frog that was being meticulously dissected round by round. It wasn't difficult to surmise how this drama would end as Gonzalez performed surgery out-boxing Villa who would land the occasional body punches.

By the fourth round Gonzalez had broken down Villa like a cardboard box—his nose was bleeding, his spirit crushed as he wandered around the ring like he was lost. Early in the round a left uppercut followed by a murderous body shot deposited Villa on the canvas. He rose at the count of two but Referee Cotton knew that Villa rising was just a natural reaction to him getting knocked down and not an assertion of him wanting to continue. Mercifully, Cotton called a halt to the rout at 49 seconds of the round, declaring Gonzalez a winner by technical knockout.

Other Results: Heavyweight **Chris “The Nightmare” Arreola** (32 wins – 2 losses – 0 draws – 28 kos) of Riverside, California won a lackluster 10-round unanimous decision by scores of 100-90 and 99-91 twice over **Friday “The 13th” Ahunanya** (24 wins – 7 losses – 3 draws – 13 kos) of Las Vegas, Nevada. The fight was nothing more than a glorified sparring session with the lighter 236 lbs. Arreola pressing the action and working the body. Ahunanya had his best round when he wobbled Arreola with a left hook in the fourth stanza. However, he never followed through, further confirming my suspicion that this was a sparring session. It doesn't matter, Friday, Saturday, Sunday—any day of the week Arreola will never be ready for the Klitschkos. It has very little to do with his weight and everything to do with his lack of exceptional boxing skills. Atlantic City's junior middleweight **Thomas “Cornflake” Lamanna** (2 wins – 0 losses – 0 draws – 2 kos) proved again that he is no ordinary cereal by making short work of debuting **Reggie “Street Fighter” Jenkins**, of Freemont, North Carolina, dropping him in the opening round, forcing the referee to call a stoppage at 2:14 of Round 1 of their scheduled four-rounder. In an entertaining four-round heavyweight bout **John “The**

Breed” Lennox (4 wins – 0 losses – 0 draws – 1 ko) of Carteret, New Jersey, scored a technical knockout over tough MMA fighter **Donnie “The Diesel” Crawford** (1 win – 1 loss – 1 draw – 1 ko) of Petersburg, West Virginia at 2:11 of the last round. Middleweight **Brandon Quarles** (5 wins – 0 losses – 0 draws – 2 kos) of Alexandria, Virginia won a four-round split-decision over southpaw **Corey Preston** (1 win – 4 losses – 0 draws – 0 kos) of Cincinnati, Ohio. The scores were 40-36, 39-37 with the dissenting judge having it 39-37 for Preston. Light-heavyweight **Cornelius White** (16 wins – 1 loss – 0 draws – 15 kos) of Houston, Texas, won a split-decision over Philadelphia’s **Dhafir “No Fear” Smith** (24 wins – 20 losses – 7 draws – 4 kos). Two judges scored the six-rounder 59-55 and 59-54 for White while the third had it 59-55 for Smith. The show opened with junior-middleweight **Denis “Momma’s Boy” Douglin** (12 wins – 1 loss – 0 draws – 8 kos) of Marlboro, New Jersey getting a much-needed win over tough **Philip “The Mongoose” McCants** (9 wins – 2 losses – 1 draw – 3 kos) of Philadelphia, PA. This was the southpaw Douglin’s return bout after suffering his first career defeat, a third-round technical knockout loss February 18th at the hands of tough spoiler Doel Carrasquillo. Douglin won a unanimous decision by scores of 60-54 twice and 58-56.

We all know that *Three Blind Mice* is an English nursery rhyme and musical round. However, it is rapidly and aptly being used as a pejorative term to describe boxing judges who continue to delay the hopes and dreams of many pugilists. It took Erislandy Lara two attempts to defect from his homeland of Cuba to pursue his dream of becoming a professional boxing world champion. He was captured on his first try in 2007 and was banned from boxing indefinitely. Not to be denied, he made it in 2008 on a speedboat to Mexico. Fighting his way up the ladder of the ranking tonight would have been his shining moment putting him in line for a title shot. It was clear to us at ringside that he had won. However, we were overruled by three judges who got it wrong for whatever reason. Something has to be done to fix this problem.

Lastly it is ironic that early this morning legendary Philadelphia trainer English “Bouie” Fisher who guided the career of future Hall of Famer and two-division world champion Bernard “The Execution” Hopkins was laid to rest. The 83-year-old Fisher was one of the few remaining sages of a dying breed—great trainers. It is no surprise that his techniques and lessons have kept Hopkins virtually intact and looking fresh as a daisy as he continues to beat men who were in diapers when he joined the punch-for-pay ranks. At 46, Hopkins is again a world champion and will probably fight until he is age 50.

Under the tutelage of George Peterson, the almost 30-year-old Williams took more punishment tonight than Hopkins received in his entire career. Fisher is probably turning over in his grave because he and Peterson belong to the same fraternity of boxing trainers. At least it is evident that the difference between Fisher and Peterson is akin to shooting a bullet and throwing a bullet. The disparity in knowledge is that wide!

Rest in Peace Bouie Fisher.

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

Post Script: On Wednesday July 13, 2011 The New Jersey State Athletic Control Board indefinitely suspended all three judges— Al Bennett, Hilton Whitaker and Don Givens for their work in the Lara vs. Williams fight. No mention was made of mandatory drug testing and eye examinations!