



Sports round-up

By MARK QUEEN

"This was the toughest one yet!"

That's how welterweight champ Emile Griffith summed up his latest successful title defense (and third victory in four starts) against persistent Luis Rodriguez.

Most of the 4,500 fans who watched Emile chop his way to another split decision over Luis at the local Convention Center last Friday night agreed that the champ had again been pushed to the limit by his arch-rival for the 147-pound crown. In fact, there were many--including eight of 18 boxing writers at ringside--who thought the challenger deserved the nod.

The 15-round brawl went much as this column expected--and resulted exactly as predicted in this space last week. Our card showed everything even after 12 rounds, with Griffith taking the 13th and 14th by close margins and the 15th a standoff. The two-point edge to Griffith coincided with the official scoring of referee Harry Krause and judge John Romero. Judge Dave Zenoff had Rodriguez ahead at the finish by one point.

There were many veteran boxing experts at various vantage points around the ring who agreed with Zenoff. Morton Moss of the Los Angeles Herald-Examiner, for instance, had Rodriguez a six-point winner at 68-62. Other capable observers who thought Luis had the better of it included Jack Cuddy of United Press-International, John Hall of the Los Angeles Times and World Boxing Writers Association president Barney Nagler of the New York Morning Telegraph.

Jimmy Cannon of King Feature Syndicate couldn't seem to make up his mind as we polled the working press immediately after the official decision was announced but finally cast a hesitant vote for Griffith.

Bob Myers of the Associated Press and Bill McCormick of Newspaper Enterprise Association liked Emile by slim margins. Ron Amos of the Las Vegas Review-Journal was one of the few newspapermen present who had Griffith in front by as much as three points, but his counterpart on the Las Vegas Sun, Alan Laythorpe, had Rodriguez on top by two.

And that's how it went, with the consensus very close to a draw, just as in the other two

15-round title fights and the one 10-rounder these two fought previously. After 55 rounds of battling, they stand dead even point-wise, including the three points awarded Griffith for being hit low in the third round last Friday.

"You see," the laughing, jubilant Emile said to us in his dressing room after the fight, "I made you look good," referring to our prediction that he would upset the 8-5 odds against him by taking a decision. Later, when we were alone for a moment, he was suddenly subdued. "This was the toughest one yet," he confided in sober retrospect. "I hope I'm through with this guy," he said.

Rodriguez was downcast as we talked to him in his dressing room. He undoubtedly thought he had won. But when he asked us if we didn't think the same and we were forced to say, "No, Luis," he merely dropped his eyes and offered no complaint.

John Condon, the Madison Square Garden publicist, tried to cheer Luis up. "Look," said John, "you can beat any other welter or even middleweight in the world. But when you get in there with Griffith you don't fight your fight. How come?"

Luis gave him a long stare and muttered one word. "Style," he said. It was almost a confession. And many another fine fighter has been frustrated by one particular opponent's peculiar ability to make him look bad.

After loudly and violently deploring the decision, Rodriguez' astute strategist, Angelo Dundee, told us confidentially, "John Condon is right. Luis doesn't fight his fight against this Griffith. He was far from his best tonight, but I didn't think Griffith fought his best, either. I wanted Luis to put the pressure on him from the start tonight. But I couldn't seem to get the message over. He blew the fight in the first few rounds. And being penalized for that unintentional low blow in the third made him too cautious."

As we saw it, Griffith had a shade the better of it in the first five and last five rounds, with Rodriguez doing his most effective work from six through ten. It was a rough fight to referee as well as a tough one to judge, and the overall officiating was more than satisfactory in our humble estimation.

BOYS ART CLASS GROWS

Participation in the beginners art class of the Las Vegas Boys Club at Jefferson Recreation Center has increased ten-fold according to club director Robert Reid.

Barbara Flanders, a member of the Artist and Craftsman Guild, has been donating two hours of her time each Thursday evening (7 to 9) to the project.

The class started with three interested parties, but Miss Flanders' charm and talent has since captured the attention of 30 potential artists.

Members of the class lately have been concentrating on charcoal portraits of "Scamp", the bow-wow personality made famous in the Walt Disney film and cartoon, "The Lady and the Tramp."

Keno Killers

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