

Holyfield outclassed; too bad judges didn't see it

By Huel Washington
Special to Sentinel-Voice
NEW YORK — A few moments after hearing that the Evander Holyfield-Lennox Lewis Unification heavyweight title bout had been called a draw, American fans joined the more than 7,000 Britishers in jeering the decision.

Americans, who periodically yelled "USA, USA" were stunned by what they heard because it was the opposite of what they had seen: A boxing bout won by the British World Boxing Council Champion Lewis.

Boxing has had bad decisions in years past, but this ranks with the most horrific, even eclipsing the draw rendered to Pernell "Sweetpea" Whittaker after he picked apart Julio Cesar Chavez in San Antonio, Texas.

Lewis dominated the first two rounds as Holyfield, the World Boxing Association and International Boxing Federation king, merely defended himself and attempted to get inside Lewis' jab.

In attempt to fulfill his promise of a third-round knockout, Holyfield stepped up his attack, backing Lewis into his corner at one time and flailing away at him

Rematch

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Neither did a sellout crowd at Madison Square Garden, but that didn't stop them from booing lustily when the shocking decision was announced.

For 12 rounds, Lewis seemed in control of the fight, landing left jabs and right leads at will and frustrating Holyfield every time he attempted to get inside to neutralize the bigger man's advantages.

In one of those rounds, the fifth, Lewis clipped Holyfield with a hard right off the top of his head, sparking a flurry of 12 to 15 head shots as Holyfield appeared helpless on the ropes and did not return a punch for 45 seconds. It was Lewis' best round of the fight. It showed in punch stats tallied at ringside, which had the WBC champion landing 43 punches to 11 for Holyfield.

Williams, a New Jersey judge, gave Holyfield the round.

"It looks like the judging is rigged almost," said Lewis trainer Emanuel Steward. "I hate to say it, this is a sport I make my living in. I'm ashamed of it."

Williams had Holyfield winning 115-113, while British judge Larry O'Connell had to give Lewis the last round to even get him the draw, with a 115-115 score.

South Africa's Stanley Christoudoulou had Lewis winning 116-113.

"I thought Lewis definitely dominated, especially the first seven rounds," Christoudoulou told the South African Press Association. "Apart from the third, it was all Lewis."

The 36-year-old Holyfield looked every year his age as he tried to get inside the jabs

during the round's waning moments. He doubled his punch output from the first two rounds but failed to knock Lewis down or out.

Holyfield returned to his patient style, which allowed Lewis to pepper him with left jabs and occasional right hands to the head.

Similar action continued, allowing Lewis to forge what appeared to be a commanding lead. It seemed a matter of time before a new champion would be crowned.

Not.

The judges apparently saw a different fight. New Jersey judge Eugenia Williams, from New Jersey, gave Lewis five rounds. All of the judges agreed on the first two rounds and the 12th round, giving them to Lewis. Williams however scored the bout 115-133 in favor of Holyfield.

Rounds 3 through 11 are where the scoring gets murky. British judge, Larry O'Connell scored five rounds for each fighter and two rounds a tie, leading to a draw, 115-115.

South African judge Stanley Christoudoulou gave Holyfield four rounds, Lewis seven rounds and scored round 11 a draw, for a 116-113 in favor of Lewis.

After the fourth round, Holyfield seemed to run out

of gas. As the shorter of the two fighters, he had difficulty overcoming Lewis' reach advantage, 84 inches to 77. Even when inside, Holyfield, a noted counterpuncher, did not do anything spectacular.

He backed Lewis into the ropes several times but never attacked. Lewis would force a tie-up and avert any danger.

As startling as the decision was, the final punch statistics make the outcome more overwhelming. According to CompuBox, Inc., Lewis threw 613 punches to Holyfield's 385.

Lewis connected on 348 punches to Holyfield's 130, for a 57 percent connecting rate; Holyfield's was 34 percent.

Lewis connected on more than half of his 364 jabs while Holyfield landed less than a third of his 171 jabs. Lewis won the power punch count, 249 to 214 and landed more of the punches, 161 to 78.

Lewis and his camp were so disappointed at the decision that they stormed out of the ring and refused to talk to the media.

"Everyone here and around the world can see that I won the fight. I think there should be a rematch," he said later.

Holyfield, even after the intense grilling by

and right leads thrown by Lewis. Holyfield connected occasionally, but never put together any series of punches in combinations that might have hurt the 33-year-old British fighter.

Lewis was credited with landing 348 punches to 130 for Holyfield, yet if it hadn't been for a late flurry in the final round he might have been going home to England without his belt as a split decision loser.

"It was my time to shine and they ripped me off," Lewis said. "I am the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world and everyone knows it."

Lewis might actually have been the undisputed champion had he gone after Holyfield with a vengeance instead of fighting carefully when he seemed to have the bout in hand. Always cautious in the ring, Lewis might have been a bit too careful when he needed to make an impression on the judges the most.

"I didn't want to fall for any sucker thing," Lewis said. "He was basically trying to use his experience to bring me in, but that didn't happen."

Still, the left side of Holyfield's face was badly swollen by the end of the fight, while Lewis was basically unmarked. With just seconds left in the fight, Lewis threw his right arm up in triumph, seemingly secure in the knowledge he had won.

Holyfield's plan to knock Lewis out in the third round had failed, and there was no backup plan when he needed it. Yet, he wasn't about to concede defeat.

"I still feel like the heavyweight champion," Holyfield said. "It's real simple. The people around the ring aren't judges."

sportscaster Larry Merchant, was reluctant to criticize the judges saying, "I left the scoring to the judges."

But deep down, he must have known the judges saved him.

Whether he intentionally or unintentionally gave a poor

performance only he and trainer Don Turner know. But that wasn't the same fighter who battled Riddick Bowe in three epic bouts, engaged in two fierce duels with Dwight Kawi and showed guts in wins over George Foreman and Larry Holmes.

"He was like an old man," Lewis said after the fight in his dressing room.

That may be true. But did age — Holyfield is 36 and Lewis is 33 — really have anything to do with it?

There will be a rematch, but will the Real Deal appear?

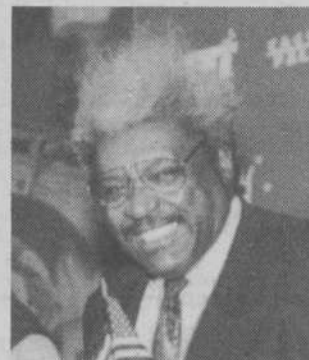
COMMENTARY

Don King deserves kudos for being Don King

By Huel Washington
Special to Sentinel-Voice

It's time African-Americans stop listening to all the vitriolic coming from opponents of Don King, president of Don King Productions and one of the world's leading boxing promoters.

I have to agree with Dr. Laurence Lawson, a white writer for the Dallas



DON KING

Morning News: "Don King has done wonders for boxing with his fight promotions."

No matter what you hear, King doesn't box. He doesn't referee and he doesn't judge any of the fights. He just promotes. "I love this country," he always says.

He has been good to the media, doling out T-shirts, notebooks and feeding them at press conferences.

He has donated charitably to many

organizations around the nation and has received countless awards for his philanthropy. He recently was given an achievement award by Grambling University for his contributions to their academic programs.

And at every big fight, King imports the celebrities such as those who, at last week's fight:

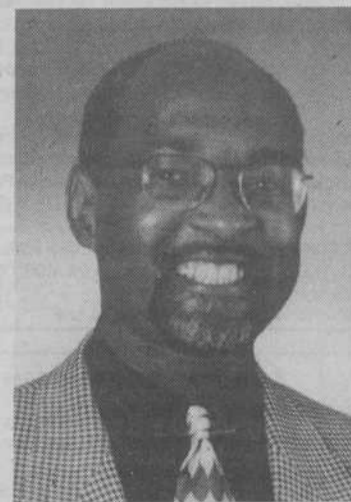
Earvin "Magic" Johnson, the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Jack Nicholson, Sean "Puffy" Combs, the Rev. Sharpton and others.

The federal government has tried him twice on various charges only to have their cases defeated by juries of his peers. Don't doubt for one moment that if the feds could do a job on King, they certainly would.

So before gong off the deep end and condemning King, consider what he has done for his people all over the world.

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