

Hopkins

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who won The Ring light heavyweight title to go with the world super middle-weight title which, in various forms, he has held for almost 11 years. "Hopkins was dirty, he tried to feign injury [when he gained a five-minute respite in the 10th round by claiming, dubiously, that Calzaghe had punched him low] and he cheated by holding and trying to spoil the fight almost the whole way through. I showed heart by getting up from that right hand in the first round and for coming through on the winning side over the rest of the fight."

The right with which Hopkins decked the Welshman, short and straight down the pipe, was an ominous sign that he and his camp, led by trainer Freddie Roach, had done their homework and had figured out a way to beat Calzaghe. He managed to rise to his feet without his legs betraying him further but he was clearly shaken. That his confidence was not altogether eroded is testament to the character of this unique fighter from the Welsh valleys.

Hopkins continued to boss the next couple of rounds by utilizing his jab, maintaining a tight guard and by tying up Calzaghe at every opportunity. He also demonstrated that his right

hand remains a potent and accurate weapon and Calzaghe's resurgence only happened when he found a way to avoid the most dangerous punch in Hopkins' arsenal by dipping forward at the waist and allowing it to slip over his shoulders.

He was not successful all of the time, however, which made it an arduous assignment for the unbeaten Briton. Calzaghe won his first round in the fourth when he raised the pace and began to time Hopkins' punches better. He made him miss and countered him effectively with his left hand. On several occasions he evaded Hopkins' right hand and landed with his own left and at the end of the round he raised his right fist to the crowd, convinced that the tide had turned.

But the wily American veteran continued to make it difficult for Calzaghe, who managed to put his frustration to one side as he made the necessary technical adjustments. He landed a solid left cross in the opening minute of the sixth round and, significantly, he was avoiding now the hard and accurate shots with which Hopkins had been having success early on. Hopkins has built his career on working out other fighters and exploiting their weaknesses but Calzaghe's cleverness and calmness under pressure

was the key to his redemption in a bout which featured many ugly exchanges as the noble art took a back seat. Still, the official punch stats — for what they are worth — showed that Calzaghe landed over 100 more punches than Hopkins, at least confirming that he made a stirring rally over the middle rounds into the second half of the bout.

Another left cross by Calzaghe in the eighth round emphasised that he had found a way to penetrate Hopkins' defences while not having to pay such a high a price. He landed several more and Hopkins began to lose the

cool efficiency that had characterised his early work. When Calzaghe landed a low left hand in the 10th it gave Hopkins an excuse to buy time and he was allowed to rest for five minutes before referee Joe Cortez waved the two men back into action. Calzaghe's momentum could not be stopped and he continued to press forward over the final two rounds to cement his victory.

"I knew that the fight wouldn't be pretty, but I won it, and this is icing on the cake for my career," Calzaghe said. "Winning a second world title is beautiful, and we'll see now where I go from here."

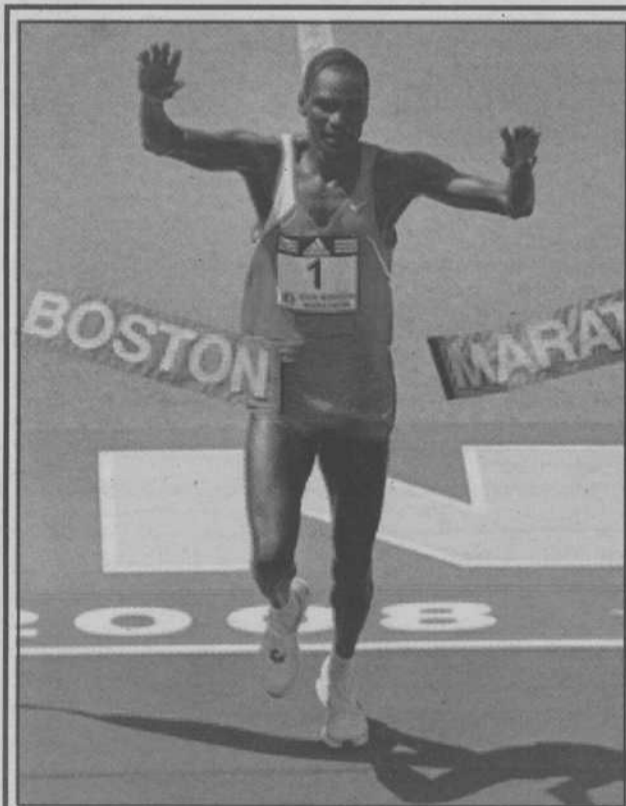
"I believe I won the fight," Hopkins said. "I know questions will be asked and it was close. But when all is said and done, history will reflect well on Bernard Hopkins. I got beaten tonight but it wasn't by Joe Calzaghe."

Hopkins, 43, looks likely to head back towards temporary retirement, but there are few indications he will call it a day for good after holding back the years once again despite defeat. "There comes a point where I know where I am in history," he said.

"Why keep pushing the envelope when you've accomplished everything? But I came back and made \$20 million from my last three fights."

"There are a lot of things I am doing besides boxing and I have an eight-year-old daughter who wants me home more than away. I think it's deserving that I give my only child some time. But the reason I came back after the two Jermain Taylor fights was to make history and prove I had a lot left. I have done that, and tonight you saw a true craftsman at work."

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MR. BOSTON

Robert Cheruiyot of Kenya raises his arms as he breaks the tape to win the Boston Marathon on Monday. Cheruiyot ran away from the pack to finish in a blistering 2 hours, 7 minutes, 46 seconds. He missed the course record he set two years ago by 32 seconds, but became the fourth man to win the world's oldest annual marathon four times. Cheruiyot earned an enhanced prize of \$150,000 — the biggest in marathon history. Kenya has produced top runners for decades.

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