

Tarver grades (himself) out high after fight - Joplin Globe

Written by Administrator

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MIAMI, Okla. — Antonio Tarver, the newest name in the heavyweight division, gave himself a high grade after his unanimous 10-round decision over Nagy Aguilera on Friday night at the Showplace in Buffalo Run Casino.

“With a 17-month layoff and I’m 41 years old, A-plus man,” Tarver said after he won 98-92 on all three judges’ cards. “I had a real guy in front of me, a live

guy. He wasn’t going to lay down. You saw that he took some tremendous shots. Anybody with any less heart would have been knocked out, but I take my hat off to Nagy.

“He came to win, but the decision wasn’t in doubt. He had to knock me out to win the fight. ... It wasn’t his night (Friday night). I think my experience really paid off, and we’re still here. People doubted me, they thought I picked the wrong guy but he was the right guy for me, a trial horse. It proved that if I couldn’t beat Nagy, I didn’t deserve to look at any top challengers. He has a granite chin. I hit him with everything, and he stood.”

Tarver showed the effects of the layoff during an actionless first round, but with each round, Tarver’s left hand became more and more effective. A Tarver flurry with Aguilera pinned in the corner in the seventh round and again late in the eighth round brought many in the near-capacity crowd to their feet.

“About the fourth or fifth round we started to pick it up a little bit, started landing some crisp combinations,” Tarver said. “That’s what we wanted to do. We knew this game is about the art of self defense. He couldn’t hit me with anything unless it was inside shots, so I stayed away from his real power.

“We had to pick it up. My coaches were telling me to let the jab go ... everything works off the jab. We landed some tremendous body shots.”

One question as Tarver moved up from the light heavyweight division was could he take a heavyweight blow.

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“I didn’t get hit with much,” Tarver said. “I’m always cautious of the punches. We’re not that brave that we’re going to stand in there and take unnecessary punishment.”

“We have to muscle up a little bit,” Tarver said. “I’m only 221. We want to lose a little bit of weight, put on a little bit more muscle and test our power next time around.”

And when will the next time be?

“About three or four months,” Tarver replied. “We won’t be looking at any long layoffs anymore. We have a two-year window of opportunity. We think by the end of 2011, we should be in position for the world title.”

And who will Tarver’s next opponent be?

“I’m not looking for anybody,” he said. “They know I have a big name out there. Any type of fight that makes sense ... we’re not going to be naive and think that we’re ready for the Klitschkos (brothers Wladimir and Vitali) and David Haye right now, but give me two more training camps, and they better look out. We’re going to get the muscle that we want and the strength that we want, and we’ll go toe-to-toe with anybody boxing.”

Wladimir Klitschko is the IBF/WBO champion, and his brother and Haye are two of the top contenders.

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