Beaten but unbowed

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Timothy Bradley doubles over after absorbing a rocking punch from Manny Pacquiao during their World Boxing Organization welterweight title match at the MGM Grand Arena in Las Vegas, Nevada. AFP PHOTO LAS VEGAS: Eight-division champion Manny Pacquiao dominated Timothy Bradley in almost every round but it was the challenger who came home with the World Boxing Organization (WBO) welterweight crown Saturday (Sunday in Manila) night at the MGM Grand Arena.
In a stunning decision, Bradley was awarded the championship by split decision, with judges C.J. Ross and Duane Ford scoring it 115-113 for Bradley. Judge Jerry Roth saw it 115-113 in favor of Pacquiao.

“I want a rematch,” Pacquiao declared after Bradley claimed his WBO welterweight world title. “That makes me become a warrior in the ring, this coming re-match, because in the rematch my thinking is I don’t want to finish the whole 12 rounds.”

Pacquiao, considered by many the best pound-for-pound fighter in the world, had won 15 straight fights dating back to 2005.

The unbeaten Bradley—the WBO light welterweight champion—absorbed punishing blows in almost every round, while rarely appearing able to hurt the Filipino superstar.

The decision was loudly booed by the near capacity crowd that waited an extra hour for the fight to give way to Game 7 of the NBA Eastern Conference finals won 101-88 by the Miami Heat over the Boston Celtics.

Bradley kept his winning streak, improving his record to 29-0, with 12 knockouts. Pacquiao fell to 54-4-2, with 38 knockouts, losing for the first time in 16 fights since his March 2005 unanimous decision loss to Mexican Erik Morales. According to Compubox statistics, Pacquiao had a clear edge in punches landed, connecting a total of 253 against Bradley’s 159.

Pacquiao also landed 190 power punches compared to Bradley’s 108.

Almost everyone on media row, including HBO’s Harold Lederman, scored the bout overwhelmingly for Pacquiao. But the judges at ringside saw it differently.

Top Rank chief executive Bob Arum, who promotes both fighters, said he had Pacquiao winning 10 rounds to 2.

In the post-fight interview by HBO’s Max Kellerman, Bradley acknowledged the punching power of Pacquiao, saying “he rocked me several times.”

Asked by Kellerman his thought of the prolonged jeering by the crowd, Bradley said he would have to review the tapes to know if he really won or not.

Pacquiao received the verdict calmly, but he insisted that “the people know who won the fight.”

“I respect the decision of the officials and the judges, but the people know who won this fight,” Pacquiao said. “I did my best, but my best was not good enough,” he added.

Asked by Kellerman if he wants a rematch, Pacquiao said, “absolutely.”

Arum said there is no doubt about a rematch because the contract signed by the fighters carried a rematch clause.

“We’ll make a lot of money on the rematch, but this is [expletive] sucks,” Arum told newsmen.

Arum praised Bradley personally and as a determined fighter, but railed against the scoring, in which judge Jerry Roth gave Pacquiao the fight 115-113, but C.J. Ross and Duane Ford both had unbeaten American Bradley winning by the same score.

Arum questioned the competence of the judges, the selection process the Nevada State Athletic Commission used to choose them, and the fact that all came from Nevada.

He suggested the commission— which oversees boxing in the state —should make the judges available next week to explain what they saw.

He quipped that he would pay to send them to his eye doctor in Los Angeles, and gave a terse “no comment” when asked if the rematch between Bradley and Pacquiao proposed for November would be in Las Vegas.

Joel Diaz, Bradley’s trainer, said Bradley hurt his left ankle in the second round, and gave his fighter the choice of Diaz stopping the fight or to continue.

The good-natured Pacquiao congratulated Bradley and his team and even told them “Bradley would be a great champion.”

In November, Pacquiao won a controversial decision of his own over Juan Manuel Marquez, but Arum said that at least that fight was close.

“This is nuts,” Arum said. “People don’t know what they’re watching anymore. I’m going to make a lot of money [with a rematch]. But who is going to take this sport seriously?”

Bradley said he did not mind the boos that rang out from the pro-Pacquiao crowd when the decision was announced, and he was not about to apologize for adding Pacquiao’s WBO welterweight belt to a resume that already included the WBO light welterweight title.

“There’s three judges out there,” Bradley said. “That’s the way they judged it. What do you want me to do? My corner thought I was winning the fight.

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