

Ref overruled after giving title to Robertson

Accra, Sunday

I HAVE been watching big-time boxing for nearly thirty years. I have reported it from nearly thirty countries and I have seen just about seventy world championships.

And nothing I have ever seen compares to the fantastic night here in Ghana when local boy Floyd Robertson won the world featherweight title from Cuban-born, Mexican-domiciled Sugar Ramos—and was robbed of his reward by two judges who overruled English referee Jack Hart.

I say I have seen some seventy world-title fights in all eight divisions. Now I tell you that this was the worst decision I have ever seen in a world championship.

On my score card I made Robertson the winner by 8 rounds to 5, with 2 even. On points I had the Ghanaian ahead by 73½ to 72½.

It wasn't even close.

Hart scored it 7 rounds to Robertson, 5 to Ramos and 3 even. His points score was Robertson 73½, Ramos 72½.

But the two judges Ramon Velazquez, who comes from Mexico City where Ramos now lives, and Ed Lassman from Miami Beach, Florida where Angelo Dundee, Ramos's mentor lives—both made Ramos the winner by a quarter of a point.

Then, to add confusion to disbelief, came the final astonishing pronouncement.

Prince Yao Boateng, chairman of the Ghana Boxing Authority announced:

"The Ghana Boxing Authority has had a meeting and decided to reverse the decision, thus making Floyd Robertson the world champion.

"We shall make an official protest to the

World Boxing Association. We also intend to ask all the African nations to recognise Robertson as world champion."

I sympathise wholeheartedly with every Ghanaian who feels—as I do—that Robertson was robbed.

But I can't support the idea that you can reverse an official verdict because you don't agree with it.

That way anarchy lies.

The supreme irony is that if the Ghana Boxing Authority does protest to the so-called World Boxing Association, their protest will go to Ed Lassman, one of the judges who voted against Robertson.

He is president of the WBA!

No Chance

Should they also protest to the World Boxing Council, their communication no doubt will go through the hands of Ramon Velazquez, the other judge who voted against Robertson.

He is the secretary general of the WBC!

In fact, what chance have they got?

The fight, like so many great ones, started slowly.

Ramos took the first by a shade. His jabs "moved" Robertson.

But in the second, Robertson was countering well. Then it developed.

In the third, Ramos landed a body punch which made Robertson wince. Then another, and this time he was warned for going low.

But in the fourth he rammed home a left hook to the liver like a red-hot poker and Robertson squirmed.

Ramos was again in trouble with his body blows in the fifth—two dubious

ones and then one really low getting him another caution.

In the next couple of rounds, it looked as though Ramos was getting there.

He was stepping up the pace, putting in the jabs and the uppercuts.

Sliced

He sliced Floyd's left cheek almost to the bone with a right cross.

He just looked too good at this stage. Then it all turned to ashes.

Gradually you realise that the unbeaten champion of the world is tiring.

The eighth was even—and Ramos did not win another round!

For the first time, Ramos was beginning to hold and, as Robertson started to get through to his head with left hooks and right crosses, the Cuban started to box open mouthed.

Now the sands were running out fast for Ramos.

He was using the old pro's trick of boxing only in bursts.

But Robertson was landing the heavier blows.

Swelling

By the eleventh the ring was a cauldron of canvas.

Ramos's handsome face was cut and bruised and the right side of his mouth was swelling.

Robertson, too, was bleeding from the mouth and he kept swallowing the blood.

All at once you realised that Ramos, the champion of the world, might lose.

In the twelfth, his legs shook after one left hook. Robertson, who had been so cautious early on, was smashing and scything and

thumping at his man now. Ramos was fighting in desperation. If the bell had not come, he must have gone down.

The thirteenth was worse. He DID go down.

Robertson was countering brilliantly and as Ramos pattered away like a child Robertson thumped him like a man.

Ramos could not close his mouth at all now.

The left hooks caught Ramos and a right cross had him teetering crazily, like a tight-rope walker who has suddenly gone blind. Then another left hook dropped him.

Pandemonium reigned. Ramos swam his way up through the mist of unconsciousness, while the

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crowd surged like boiling ink.

As the Cuban tottered up at three, the bell rang—and rang again—like a fire alarm to be heard above the eardrum shattering din.

At the same time, half a dozen shrieking fans piled into the ring, thinking the fight had been stopped and that Robertson was the new world champion.

The fourteenth round was murder—even from outside the ring.

Robertson, who had boxed as though he had a blueprint in front of him—take it easy for the first half of the fight, then cut loose—was smashing away at Ramos's poor, pitiful face.

A face which looked like a plate-glass window through which someone has thrown a brick.

The Ghanaian was fighting the fight of his—or anyone else's—life.

I cannot remember a more wickedly punishing fight and at the bell both men were nearly out.

Ramos because of what had been done to him. Robertson because of what he had done.

They sent Ramos out for the fifteenth with shouts of "Ultimo, Ultimo—the last, the last."

Through the fog of pain and dazedness, he staged a last, incredible rally.

The Cuban was now

Judges who said 'No' are attacked by angry fans in Ghana

bleeding from the mouth like a bull who has suffered the matador's final, fatal stroke.

I have never seen two men give and take more punishment.

Ramos was warned for a kidney punch, but then, incredibly, he nearly put Robertson down with a left hook to the liver.

Rallied

Robertson rallied with a left hook to the jaw and they were thrashing away to each other's heads when—it's the bell, the FINAL bell.

And then . . . that awful decision.

Hart for Robertson. Judges Lassman and Velazquez for Ramos.

Ugliness followed and, ironically, it was little Sammy Docherty, Robertson's Scottish manager, who got Lassman away from a section of the crowd who were kicking at him.

As I came away from Robertson's dressing room

after commiserating with him, a man came towards me with fingers like talons hooked for my throat.

He thought I was one of the judges, and it took a good Ghanaian companion to convince him that he was in error.

I got to Ramos's dressing room where the Cuban was fingering his face like a blind man feeling his way round an unfamiliar room.

As well as the terrible swelling above his mouth, there was a cut on his pouting lips which looked as though he had been bitten by a vampire.

Eventually he was taken by the doctor to a hospital, where his lip and the inside of his mouth were stitched and where X-rays fortunately showed that he had no fracture.

Meanwhile, his dressing room, where the two judges had come, became something like a beleaguered fortress, with soldiers and police keeping the milling crowd away.

Bitter attacks were made

on promoter Jack Solomons, both to his face and over the radio.

Unfairly, for he had never met either judge until they arrived in Ghana and he, too, thought that Robertson had won.

Eventually, thanks to the good offices of a senior officer, I was given a military escort to my car.

Yet I for one could not blame the people fuming in their frustration.

It had been one of the greatest fights I have ever watched flawed only by the judges' inexplicable verdict.

And from the first bell to the journey back to the hotel, it had been like living on a volcano's lip.

Dubious

If Ramos ever makes 9st. again—and that is dubious—he has promised to give Robertson a return.

But I wonder if he will be as good a fighter again.

THERE WAS ONE MAGNIFICENT FOOTNOTE.

Hours after the fight, Robertson came to Ramos's hotel room.

Robertson speaks no Spanish and Ramos speaks only that language.

But somehow, the two of them conveyed to each other the respect which two brave fighting men feel for one another.

It did much to take the sour tastes from our mouths.



Peter Wilson
reporting . . .

6 The most sensational world championship I have seen in 30 years 9

Daily Mirror
May 11, 1964