

106th Varsity Boxing Match

By Peter Ho

9 March 2013, The Corn Exchange, Cambridge - Oxford prevailed over arch-rivals Cambridge in the 106th instalment of the Varsity Boxing Match. With this victory, both teams are on completely level terms in the fixture with 51 Varsity victories apiece and 4 draws.

In the featherweight contest, OUABC Club President Mikey Davis (Balliol) was relentless in hunting down Cambridge's Nick Melgaard (Corpus Christi) and he earned a unanimous decision to put OUABC 1-0 up.

Mikey's colleague, returning Blue James Watson (Corpus Christi), won via a third round stoppage at the 105th Varsity Boxing Match but settled his match in the lightweight division rather more quickly this time in the first round by flooring his accomplished opponent, Stefan Lavelle (Gonville & Caius). Watson seized control of his match from the first bell and tagged his unfortunate opponent with several hard and laser accurate shots to force the referee to stop the contest.

With OUABC 2-0 up, however, OUABC's Men's Captain Tom Eliaz (Worcester) was unable to continue his fine form throughout the season against his scrappy and spoiling opponent Li Xiaofeng (Queen's). Eliaz unlocked his opponent's awkward boxing style in the third round and forced the referee to give Li a standing eight-count but the latter was given the nod by a majority of the judges.

In the welterweight bout, Varsity debutante Conor Husbands (St. Edmund Hall) stopped crowd favourite and returning Blue Sebastian Pender (Peterhouse) in the third round to restore OUABC's two victory advantage. Husbands' remarkable composure against his more experienced opponent allowed him to prevail whenever the pair stood toe-to-toe in the ring. Pender was made to count the referee's fingers twice in the first round and was only just saved by the bell. He clung on to last another one and a half rounds but the referee finally saw sense and stopped the contest.

Daniel Bailey (Exeter) was unfortunate to lose in a brutal encounter with William Nyerere Plastow (Robinson), who was eventually named the evening's outstanding boxer by the judges. What Bailey lacked in experience he made up for in heart. Despite the judges all seeing the fight go the same way, it was a close contest.

In the first middleweight contest, OUABC's less fancied Zac Sammour (Somerville) comprehensively outpointed former Dark Blue boxer and CUABC captain Borna Gueval (Hughes Hall). Sammour stunned the Cambridge support in the Corn Exchange by giving Gueval two standing counts in the first round and another in the third.

With the scores at 4-3, OUABC only needed one victory to take the Truelove Bowl back to Oxford. However, in the second middleweight contest, a majority of the judges appeared to court controversy by awarding Gueval's team mate, William Wakeford (Hughes Hall), a victory over the callow but spirited Iain Holland (St. Benet's Hall) who appeared to have done enough with his sustained aggression over the three rounds.

Nonetheless, Harry Miller (Wadham) settled the destination of the Truelove Bowl with a clinical points victory over his stout opponent Tinashe Murozoki (Churchill). Miller easily picked off Murozoki with his superior range, forcing Murozoki to miss with the majority of his attempts. But, controversially, Miller only won via a majority decision. The mystifying decision of a single judge to award the bout to Cambridge was forgotten in the midst of the ensuing celebrations: Oxford had won the 106th Varsity Boxing Match!

In the final bout of the evening, Larry Kotch (Green Templeton) stopped his Cambridge opponent Dan Fountain (Hughes Hall) in the third round. It appeared to be the result of an accumulation of heavy punches rather than a single thundering one, but just before the referee stopped the contest in the third round, Fountain looked like he was straddling a punt in a storm.

It was a famous victory for Oxford but a resounding one for the tradition of the Varsity Boxing Match as both teams performed admirably.



Davis setting the tone for the night with his unanimous win over Melgaard. (Photo by Simon Halliday)



Husbands artfully using his long range to his advantage in his fight against Pender. (Photo by Simon Halliday)



Miller and Murozoki's close contest. (Photo by Francesca Tye)



OUABC's jubilant celebration as Captain Eliaszi claims the Truelove Bowl. (Photo by Francesca Tye)