

Erdei stops Mitchell, eyes Hopkins

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ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. -- Former light heavyweight titleholder Zsolt Erdei of Hungary gave his cheering throng of some 700 Hungarian fans, who waved flags and chanted throughout his fight, exactly what they wanted: a knockout win against faded former super middleweight titlist Byron Mitchell on Saturday night.

Erdei used his quick hands and accurate punches to methodically take apart Mitchell before stopping him in the sixth round on the undercard of the Carl Froch-Glen Johnson Super Six World Boxing Classic semifinal at the Adrian Phillips Ballroom at Boardwalk Hall.

Al Bello/Getty Images Zsolt Erdei, right, looked like a 175-pound contender again in his dismantling of Byron Mitchell.

Mitchell (28-8-1, 21 KOs), who lost his third fight in a row by knockout, was never in the fight. Erdei (33-0, 18 KOs) beat Mitchell, of Dothan, Ala., to the punch round after round.

Mitchell was beginning to fade in the fifth round when Erdei began to really pick up the pace and was hitting him nearly at will. Mitchell looked exhausted and ready to drop just as the round ended.

In the sixth round, Erdei, 37, dropped Mitchell, also 37, early in the round. Mitchell easily beat the count but looked weary. Erdei continued to tee off on him with both hands until a booming right-left combination dropped him again. Mitchell beat the count again, but he was non-responsive to referee Eddie Cotton, who stopped the fight at 1 minute, 58 seconds.

Erdei had held a light heavyweight belt but vacated it to move up in weight and won a cruiserweight title in 2009. After a one-year layoff, Erdei decided to return to light heavyweight, signed with promoter Lou DiBella and came to the United States to campaign. He won his return to the division in November, but looked a bit rusty.

He looked sharp against Mitchell as he closes in on a shot at a belt.

"I thought he looked much better than the fight in November," DiBella said. "The last time, he was rusty. His hands were flying tonight. He throws combinations, he's a very good boxer and he belongs in that group of fighters at the top of the division. He's a very good fighter."

Erdei, who could loom as a challenger for titlist Nathan Cleverly, has designs on bigger names such as champion Bernard Hopkins or even Jean Pascal, who lost the championship to Hopkins on May 21 in a close fight.

"We are looking for a world championship," said Erdei, who had trainer Fritz Sdunek back in his corner after he had to miss the November bout. "I met Hopkins [who is in town for the fight] earlier at the hotel and I have great respect for him. Hopkins is the best boxer in this division. It will be a big challenge if I get a chance to fight this guy. Let's see it happen."

Hopkins likely will defend his title against former titlist Chad Dawson in the fall. It is possible Pascal could be on the undercard and would need an opponent.