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Kenny Porter Exclusive: On Spence's Fouls, Rematch, and Moving Forward

By [Caryn A. Tate](#) on October 4, 2019



"I was him before he became who he is." (Ryan Greene/Premier Boxing Champions)

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Kenny discussed his thought process behind Shawn's early training as an athlete and as a boxer, and how it all played into the fight with Spence...

Last Saturday at Staples Center in Los Angeles, former WBC world welterweight champion Shawn Porter (30-3-1, 17 KOs) put on a stunning performance against the favored Errol Spence Jr. in a title unification bout. While Porter lost a close split decision in a tremendous fight, the skills and the heart he showed throughout the 12 rounds won over those watching.

Shawn's father and head coach, Kenny Porter, took a few minutes to speak exclusively with Boxing.com about his perceptions of the fight, a rematch, and his early strategies for how to most effectively train his son to be the highly skilled boxer that he is today.

Kenny discussed his thought process behind Shawn's early training as an athlete and as a boxer, and how it all played into the fight with Spence.

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"I was an athlete growing up, and at a very young age I was identified by other coaches as being a very good athlete," Kenny explained. "I wouldn't say in the truest sense I was recruited, but there were coaches that sought me out to come play football for them. By the time I got to the fourth grade I was taken out of public school and put into Catholic school to wrestle for a Catholic school wrestling team. That was a school that you had to pay a tuition to go there, but the years I was there, the tuition was very minimal for my mother because I was a pretty good wrestler.

"The athlete that I was as a kid and as I got older...I identified the things I did very well and I saw those same things in Shawn at a young age. I put him in sports and he just excelled. So the things that I did well, I knew he would be very good at. And the things that I didn't do very well, that were hard for me in the sports that I competed in, I knew that I would have to make sure that he worked even harder to be good at those things.

"If we talk about football, I knew I could run the ball very well; he could run the ball very well. I knew that I tackled well; he tackled very well. Things that I knew were problems for me, I knew would be some of those same situations for him. I had already been through those same things. I was small when I was growing up, and I knew Shawn would be small.

"When we talk about boxing, what were the things that gave me trouble? It was taller fighters and left handers. So I worked with Shawn well before he ever became a professional fighter on how to beat taller fighters and left handers."

Of course, Shawn's opponent last Saturday was both of those things: tall and a southpaw.

Kenny said, "We worked on these things [early on]. This is nothing new to us. It's not something we're afraid of or concerned with. I haven't re-watched the fight, but I don't think there was ever a point that it looked like, when we were boxing from the outside, Errol Spence gave us so much trouble. I don't think he landed a ton of punches from the outside.

"So that's where that came from. I was him before he became who he is, and I just made sure he was prepared."



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Regarding Saturday's fight versus Spence, Kenny explained what he saw both Shawn and Errol doing in the ring that night.

"These are Shawn's words that I'm echoing...We came in with the thought process of being unpredictable and making Errol Spence uncomfortable. And I feel that we accomplished that for the most part. I think that both guys fought great fights, no doubt.

"I must say that [Errol] fought more on the inside, was stronger on the inside (than expected), but I've also got to add onto that: the low blows that Errol hit my son with throughout this fight—the repeated low blows—took away Shawn's energy. First of all I've never seen him take low blows like that, but I had never seen Shawn's energy look like it was depleting before. So I asked him repeatedly in the corner what was going on, and he wouldn't tell me. But he knows from previous situations—in the Adrian Granados fight, he broke his hand in that fight and he didn't tell me. I told him afterwards, in other camps after that, that you've got to tell me everything that's going on so I can make adjustments.

"He told me in the corner, 'There's nothing we can do about it, but I can't feel anything down there. It's all numb.' I looked at him and I said, 'You can't feel anything?' He said, 'I can't feel anything down there. My legs are numb. Everything is numb.' It started from him getting hit with these low blows.

"At that point I said, 'Don't worry about it. Look, here's what we're gonna do. We're gonna change the game plan.' And we had to change it there because he said, 'My quads are gone.'

"The reason this kid was so good on the inside with us was because he was repeatedly throwing low blows that hurt Shawn. I spoke to the referee [Jack Reiss]. I gotta be more forceful about it in future fights, but I spoke to the referee three or four times. I respect the referee, he's reffed our fights before. I think he's a great guy, a great ref. But I said to him, 'Jack, you've gotta do something about these low blows.' His reply to me was, 'Shawn is wearing his shorts so high, there's nothing I can do about it.'

"I just felt like this was the worst thing that I had ever heard from a referee. I'd tell him to his face. He doesn't like it, I'm sorry. But you can never tell a fighter or a coach in a ring that there's nothing you can do about a foul. Because he's the guy in control of everything that's going on. There's always something you can do about a foul.

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"[Reiss'] reply to me just made me feel like, Damn, I can't do anything to help my kid here. So what I did when he said that to me was, I pulled Shawn's shorts down right in front of him to show Shawn's belly button. And he nodded his head like, yes. And then he continued to watch the fouls happen.

"There were other fouls—forearms, elbows, that were very evident and flagrant. One in our very corner at the end of a round. Myself, my coach Barry Hunter, my other coach and my strength and conditioning guy, all yelled, 'Hey man! Do something about that!' There was no warning. There was no caution to Errol Spence about this. And it was so flagrant. When I say flagrant, I mean to the point where when he missed [the punch], his arm was still in position, bent at the elbow, swinging. So it's like, 'What's going on here?'"

"Again, I respect the referee to the utmost. I really do. But somebody needs to take a look at this tape. Somebody needs to say something has to be done about this type of situation."

In the lead-up to Spence vs. Porter, Errol Spence frequently accused Shawn Porter of being a “dirty fighter.” Kenny addressed that in light of what happened on fight night.

“Errol Spence came into this fight repeatedly saying Shawn Porter was a dirty fighter. I need someone to show me when Shawn got hit with a low blow that he retaliated with a low blow, that he retaliated with an elbow, or hitting the kid behind the head, or with a rabbit punch, or anything that he’s been accused of doing.”

Kenny explained what Spence’s low blows really amounted to as relates to Shawn’s performance on fight night.

“It was really bad and it was bad to the point where it really took away what he was doing,” Porter said. “So our chances to be successful were lessened. Our effectiveness was lessened. I noticed we were losing punching power. I noticed we were losing snap on the punches. I even said it to my guys in the corner. So I implored Shawn to tell me what was wrong so I could try to make some kind of adjustment.

“But [Shawn] fought a gallant fight, and he willed himself even through that situation. After the fact, hindsight being 20/20, I wish I had done more. I wish I had even gotten in the referee’s face more than I did. But I didn’t do that because that’s not my way. I want to be professional and I want to do everything the way it’s supposed to be done. So in that situation the best thing you can do is tell the ref, hey, we have a situation we need you to watch out for. There was one time I even slammed my hand down on the canvas a couple times, yelling at him about what I was seeing. The boxing commission, who was sitting near me, told me, ‘Mr. Porter, you can’t do that. You can’t hit the canvas, you can’t yell at the referee.’

“Moving forward, from this point on, I don’t know—I’m not gonna be able to contain myself in that situation. I know I can’t get Shawn to become a dirty fighter. He won’t do it. It’s not his way. So someone’s gotta protect him if the referee’s not protecting him.

“There was one time that Shawn complained about a low blow he got hit with. And at the same time Errol throws another shot [low] and the referee does nothing about it. Again, with all due respect to everybody involved—I still think Jack Reiss is a great ref. I’ve always been happy with the work he’s done. But this type of thing—it takes away from your opportunity to be effective.

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“Getting hit on the hips will numb your legs. So we dealt with a lot of adversity that we didn’t anticipate and we didn’t get the help that we needed from the referee in that situation.”

Kenny Porter expanded upon the adjustments Team Porter made after Shawn told his corner about the leg numbness.

“The adjustment made at that point was to get him to use his legs less. I wanted him to stop moving so much at that point because he was having trouble with his legs. Less [leg] movement, more head movement, and more of a defensive posture to block Errol’s punches from the outside and then make his adjustment to get to the inside. Because it took our legs, it took away from our effectiveness of moving in and out, moving vertically.”

As far as how the rounds were scored, some raised their eyebrows at the two cards (by judges Steve Weisfeld and Ray Danseco) that read 116-111 for Spence. The other card, by judge Larry Hazzard, was 115-112 for Porter.

“I was caught up in the moment, so I was not able to track the rounds,” Kenny said. “Barry Hunter, he was giving me scores and he told me it was an even fight going into the 11th. But what those judges said, us only getting four rounds, that’s just not consistent with what was going on in the ring. I’m not a big proponent of giving an assessment of what I saw when I’m in the moment of the fight, but I felt my kid did more than enough. If not enough to win then it should’ve been a draw.

“But this is what we had to deal with. We’ll move forward. We’re ready to do the rematch. Shawn came out of the fight healthy. He didn’t have much soreness at all. There were no complaints on his behalf. He did one day of recovery, which was cryogenics,

at home. We have a cryo tub, an electric tub that keeps the water at about 40 degrees. After that, he did a spa day where he was in a dry heat sauna, a wet sauna, and a jacuzzi for probably a total of an hour and a half, give or take. Did some stretching.

“The second day we were going to repeat the process, and he calls me up—he’s very happy. Joyful. I hear it in his voice. He said, ‘I feel great. No need to do it again.’

“We’re about to go do a workout. There’s no residue from this fight at all. No injuries, nothing he’s dealing with at all. So this first week right here, he’ll kind of move around and do different things. No boxing. But after that he’ll be ready to go.”

Errol recently posted on social media saying, “Let’s run it back.” Shawn responded with his own post, saying, “This machine is ready to go back to work when you are!”

Kenny feels a rematch with Spence is a no-brainer for all parties involved.

“My understanding is the Staples Center sold out or close to it. The pay-per-view [numbers] look really good from what I’m hearing. I believe this is the best commercial you can get to promote the next fight. By my estimation, that means another sellout and double on the pay-per-view.”

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