SHEFFIELD, England (Hallam FM Arena) – Junior welterweight champion Ricky Hatton, 40-0 (30 KOs), England, 139½, stormed through Colombian Carlos Maussa, 20-3 (18 KOs), 140, to unify the IBF and WBA belts, scoring a resounding ninth-round knockout.

Hatton charged from the opening bell toward the awkward Maussa. His bull rushes allowed him to land solidly to the body of the twisting and turning Colombian.

Unfortunately for Hatton, the tactic also permitted a clash of heads that opened a gaping rip over his left eye. In some boxing jurisdictions the bout would have been stopped at that point due to the severity of the cut and the fact that it was pouring blood.

Nonetheless, Hatton crowded Maussa and never pulled back from the fight. Maussa engaged in his usual free-swinging style and was able to land some to the body, but it did not slow Hatton.

In round two, a less serious cut developed over Hatton's right eye, again appearing as a result of a clash of heads.

Hatton punished Maussa to the body and slowed him considerably with each succeeding round. Maussa, who had captured his belt in an upset of Vivian Harris in June, had no answers to any tactic Hatton tried.

In the following rounds neither cut substantially worsened, due primarily to Maussa's inability to land any punches of consequence to Hatton's head.

As the fighters entered the ninth round, the champion noticeably weakened Maussa from the frenetic pace and voluminous body shots.

Hatton crashed both fists into the usually elusive Maussa and culminated with a sharp left hook that sent his opponent crumpling to the canvas. Despite being able to nearly regain his feet by the count of ten it was clear that he was no longer able to fight.

The end came at 1:10 of the round.

The Sweet Science scored the fight 80-72 for Hatton through round eight.

Hatton claimed a desire to take on WBC titlist Floyd Mayweather and WBO belt holder Miguel Cotto that would sweep the division. Mayweather, of course, tops many pound-for-pound lists, and Cotto is a tough, undefeated fighter emerging quickly out of prospect status.

It is certain that the cuts sustained in this fight will require a substantial recovery period. More than likely, following the recovery period Hatton will face a "mandatory" for one or more of the

sanctioning bodies that will mean that potential bouts with Cotto or Mayweather will remain in the distant future.

Hatton now claims the IBF/WBA titles and the less recognized WBU title. With his win over Kostya Tszyu he had already captured the lineal championship and with it *The Ring* magazine belt.

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In a featured undercard bout, world-ranked cruiserweight, 41-year-old Carl Thompson, 34-6, (25 KOs), England, won a ten-round decision over France's Frederic Serrat, 23-5 (9 KOs). The older Thompson spent much of the bout going backwards but landed the more plentiful and meaningful punches throughout. Scoring was done by the referee and was 98-93 for Thompson. *The Sweet Science* scored the fight 97-94.