

## Layla McCarter Beats Belinda Laracuenta for GBU title in three-minute rounds

Written by David A. Avila

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LAS VEGAS – Layla McCarter captured the GBU lightweight world title against Belinda Laracuenta on Friday in the first female prizefighting world title bout with three-minute rounds.

Before a sold-out crowd numbering more than 2,000 at the Orleans Casino, McCarter out-raced Laracuenta for 10 rounds and her third world title.

“I didn’t do what I wanted,” said McCarter (21-12-4) who fights out of Las Vegas. “We were colliding heads a lot.”

Laracuenta, who made her fame in the boxing world in 2000 in a match against Christy Martin, displayed a slick boxing style, but she couldn’t find the winning formula against McCarter during the much-expected title fight.

“She didn’t fight the way I expected her to fight,” Laracuenta (22-14-4) said. “She was good, but she was holding too much. I didn’t know she fought like that.”

For most of the early going McCarter was the busier fighter and was more adept at landing four and five-punch combinations. Laracuenta countered with stiff lefts and rights but never as many as her opponent.

Luis Tapia, who trains McCarter, felt his charge would have been more effective with a steady dose of punches to the abdomen.

“She should have thrown more body punches,” Tapia said.

Both fighters have fought many outstanding opponents in their careers, but it was their first meeting with each other, and their boxing styles clashed continuously.

During one exchange in the sixth round, both fighters collided heads with McCarter emerging with a thick cut on the right cheekbone. Blood gushed quickly, but referee Joe Cortez felt it was not severe. McCarter seemed to become slightly irritated by the cut and a furious exchange ensued.

“I had never been cut in my life. It was strange to have blood going down my cheek,” McCarter said. “It was a new experience.”

Through most of the fight the Las Vegas fighter landed her combinations and tied up Laracuenta’s arms.

“I couldn’t get inside,” said Laracuenta who lives in New York but was born in Puerto Rico. “She won the fight, but I think I could have won if we fought inside more.”

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The judges scored the fight 100-90, 99-91, 97-93 for McCarter.

McCarter felt she could have done more for the crowd.

"I was off a little because of the extra minute," said McCarter, who has crusaded for women to have equal three-minute rounds like her male colleagues. "I could have done a lot more. I'm a little disappointed with myself but I felt the crowd was pleased."

Laracuenta said she would like a rematch with McCarter.

"I wasn't ready for her style," Laracuenta said.

McCarter said she plans to defend her newly won world title in January.

"I'll be even better next time," she said.

### Other bouts

Jose Gonzalez (14-3) lost the IBA featherweight crown to Las Vegas boxer Daniel Maldonado (20-2, 13 KOs) in an action-packed world title bout.

Though Gonzalez scored a brutal knockdown in the sixth with a right uppercut-left hook combination, and Maldonado looked ready to fall for good, the tall rangy fighter kept on his feet and simply fired more punches than the champion. The judges scored it a split-decision for Maldonado 116-111, 114-113 for Maldonado and 116-111 for Gonzalez.

In a super middleweight bout between southpaws, Las Vegas boxer Deshaun Cohen (5-1) scored a unanimous decision over Oakland's Jose Grace (3-1) after four rounds. The judges scored it 40-36 twice and 39-37.

A second super middleweight bout saw Donnie Orr score a first round knockdown with an overhand right against Victor Robles. For the next two rounds it was Orr's fight as he landed repeatedly with stronger and quicker punches than his opponent. At 1:55 of the third round Robles corner asked the referee to halt the fight.

Lightweights Oscar Marin (2-0) of Las Vegas and Alejandro Cortez (0-3) of Fresno mixed it up in a four-round bout that featured plenty of action. Cortez had his best moment in the second round when he landed a left hook-right hand-left hook combination that stunned Marin. But the Las Vegas boxer regained the momentum with a busier pressure style that resulted in a unanimous decision 39-37 on all three cards.

Cesar Grajeda made his pro debut against Oxnard's Cristian Magallon and scored a unanimous decision. Grajeda knocked down Magallon with a left hook in the second round.