

Heather Percival Wins Vacant California Title

Written by David A. Avila
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MONTEBELLO, CALIF.-In a bloody slugfest Heather Percival captured the California bantamweight title over Hollywood's Rita Valentini on Friday.

Highly-ranked bantamweight Percival used more accurate punching and movement to win the title by unanimous decision before more than 1,500 people at the Quiet Cannon golf course. But it was close throughout the contest.

Valentini (6-5) ran into a counter left hook that staggered her and a follow-up right hand seemed to be the punch that bloodied her nose in the opening round. It bled and bled for all six rounds.

"I thought I hurt her in the first round with a right hand," said Percival (10-4) who fights out of Fontana. "She was strong, real strong. I knew what to expect ahead of time."

Though Valentini's nose bled profusely she stepped up her attack and cut off the retreating Percival at every juncture in the second round. It was Percival's blocking skills that allowed her avoid any serious blows.

After the second round, Percival appeared to be more confident about her strategy and fired three-punch combinations with effectiveness throughout the fight and slipped away from counters. But Valentini refused to slow down and continued to ignore the blood pouring down her nose while firing away at Percival. Several times Valentini caught Percival with right hands as the Fontana boxer moved away.

"My straight punches seemed to be working the best," Percival said. "I didn't want to let her use her strength on me."

After the third round Percival seemed to settle into a groove as she attacked with three-punch combinations and skipped away out of danger with Valentini trying to get close the distance.

The judges scored the fight 58-56, 59-55 twice for Percival.

In a six-round junior welterweight semi-main event Colton's Freddie Barrera (10-2-1) and L.A.'s Francisco "Kiko" Zepeda (4-5-3) fought three rounds. But a large cut over Barrera's left brow caused by an accidental head butt forced referee Ray Corona to ask for the ringside physician's advice. Dr. Leandro Gatus advised that Corona stop the fight at 1:05 of the third round. Due to the premature stoppage, the fight was ruled a technical draw.

In a junior welterweight four-round bout Riverside's Hector Serrano (3-0) used his height and reach to score a first round knockout over debuting Cesar Garcia (0-1). Serrano caught Garcia with a sneak right hand during a furious exchange that saw referee Corona give the boxing journalist-turned professional prizefighter an eight-count. Garcia got up. The Riverside fighter resumed his attack as Garcia fought back hard but was dazed again. Referee Corona stopped

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the fight as Garcia wobbled against the ropes at 1:35 of the first round.

“I never saw the punch,” said Garcia who’s an excellent boxing and MMA journalist. “I didn’t want to give a boring fight.”

He didn’t. Garcia looked pretty good for a mid-30s athlete stepping in the ring for the first time. And against a young 20-year-old.

New sensation Brian Ramirez (3-0, 3 KOs), who is managed by Antonio Margarito, engaged in a toe-to-toe exchange with Orange County’s Ron Scoesdang (1-1) from the opening bell. Not more than 30 seconds had elapsed when both landed big blows. The left hand landed for Scoesdang but a powerful right uppercut by Ramirez froze him and left him immobile as the Mexican fighter poured on several more right hands that left the left-handed fighter collapsed against the ropes. Referee James Jen Kin stopped the fight at 2:10 of the first round.

Those in attendance were WBO welterweight titleholder Antonio Margarito who is training in nearby El Monte and heavyweight sensation Chris “The Nightmare” Arreola who will be fighting on the same card as Margarito in July at the Home Depot Center in Los Angeles.