

The Hitman Hooks Another Win, KOs Castillo

Written by Michael Woods
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The end for Jose Luis Castillo came at 2:16 of the fourth round, as he was unable to process a Hitman Hatton left hook to the rib-cage, and referee Joe Cortez counted ten on Saturday evening at the Thomas and Mack Center in Las Vegas.

But in reality, the end for Castillo probably began on May 7, 2005, when he was knocked out by Diego Corrales in the tenth round of their fight for the ages.

The Mexican battler, age 33, came to the ring weighing 153 pounds, after weighing in at 140 on Friday. From the get go, his hands looked a notch slower than Hatton, age 28, who weighed 149 pounds after officially weighing in at 140 pounds.

Castillo stood two inches taller than Hatton, 5-8 to 5-6, and Hatton's IBO junior welterweight title was up for grabs in a fight that many believed had fight of the year potential.

Neither man was in sniper mode, and Castillo truly strayed from the bullseye early in the fourth and final round. He hit Hatton low, and Cortez took a point from the Mexican. Ricky didn't blink twice, though, and got back to business.

Hatton (43-0, 31 KOs) tossed a left hook, which Castillo (55-8-1) ducked. But Hatton doubled up, and re-delivered the lacerating left, dropping it on Castillo's ribcage.

Castillo spun around, dropped to his knees, and breathed deeply. His mouthpiece was halfway out of his mouth, as Cortez counted down the end of his career. Eight, nine, ten, that was it. He didn't grimace, or close his eyes to convey the severe agony he felt. Rather, it was a more polite concession.

In the third round, both boxers closed the distance, and wanted to land uppercuts. The crowd sensed a toe to toe, head to head mash up would be forming. Hatton found a home for his left hook and Castillo's offering were tepid, at best. Was he worrying about money matters, or was his heart sore over his brother's death? Had his body taken too much punishment, in trying to make weight, and against heavy hitting foes?

The second round saw Hatton looking crisp, like the "old" Ricky, not the version who underwhelmed America against Colazzo and Urango. Both men were in grabby mode, and Cortez warned Castillo not to stray below the belt. Hatton's left hook, again, looked sharp and strong, whether he was wearing 8, 10 or 14 ounce gloves.

In the first, Hatton looked peppy, nothing Ricky "Fatton" about him. He doubled up on left hooks on Castillo and then shoved him with his right to the canvas. Referee Cortez called it a push, not a knockdown, but that showed that Castillo lacked in the leg strength department.

Hatton's adoring fandom made themselves known, exercising their lungs at top decibel level. Both men engaged in grabby tactics, and Cortez cautioned them to cut the rasslin at 1:40. At

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the end of the round, a swab of Castillo's nose drew blood, and it was clear that some of Hatton's jabs had hit home.

--You might've noticed, Max Kellerman joined Jim Lampley on the broadcast. The torch has been passed. The suits have spoken, the time for the next generation is now.

--Agree or disagree? Before the bout, an Englishman who trekked to Vegas for the bout was featured. He asked, what American boxer could sell 11,000 tix in England. I pondered...Mike Tyson? Maybe Tyson could. That's my only nominee.

--Hatton had on a blue sombrero and a robe that said "Manchester Mexican" on it. It was, I guess, a nod to Castillo's fan-base, in the style of PBF coming into the ring wearing a sombrero against ODLH.