

WBO Champ Montiel Out-Bangs Melendez

Written by David A. Avila

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LAS VEGAS-WBO junior bantamweight titleholder Fernando Montiel can make a good fight or a boring fight, on Thursday he chose to stand and trade bombs with Colombian southpaw Luis Melendez (25-3-1, 20 KOs) to the delight of the crowd at the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino.

Mexico's Montiel (35-2-1, 26 KOs) can box and move all day if he chooses, well he chose to fight and trade with heavy-handed Melendez and suffered more cuts and bruises than usual.

A clash of heads during an exchange in the fourth round opened a cut above the left eye of the Colombian. Montiel suffered a small bump on his forehead but no blood.

It looked like the fight was over in the sixth round when Montiel hurt Melendez with a combination then dropped him with a long right hand. Though Melendez got up, Montiel felt his opponent was near finished and began to celebrate and showboat. He even walked Melendez back to the corner.

Bad mistake.

Melendez caught the slippery Montiel with a left hand that dropped the Mexican fighter on his butt early in the seventh. He waited for the count of nine then rose shaking his head in disgust at himself. The fight was on.

"I could tell he was going to get up," said Montiel. "He was a very tough guy with a good chin."

Though Montiel was the quicker and more evasive fighter, and a master of the punch feints, Melendez's power kept him in the fight. His left hand proved potent and right hook landed enough to be a concern for Montiel.

At the end of the 11th round a right hand pierced Melendez's guard and stunned him momentarily. When the 12th round began, Montiel stood his ground and fired a left hook- left uppercut-left hook combination that stunned the Colombian again, then a right hand moved him to the ropes where he fired a left to the body that dropped him for the count again. He got up, but this time Montiel went in for the finish and fired a four-punch combination that forced referee Kenny Bayless to stop the fight at 1:28 of the final round.

"I expected a tough fight, but it was even tougher than I even expected," said Montiel who had bumps and cuts all over his face. "He could hit pretty hard."

Montiel said the Colombian fighter was the toughest opponent he'd ever faced.

"I hit him with punches that normally others would not survive," Montiel said.

Urbano Antillon (20-0, 13 KOs) needed only two rounds to power through Colombia's

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left-handed Wilson Alcorro (25-9, 17 KOs) in a lightweight bout in the semi-main event.

After a solid first round by the Maywood, California fighter, Antillon began drilling Alcorro's body and received a warning by referee Jay Nady for going low. Then Alcorro landed a blow even lower and Nady warned him too. But the body punches by Antillon opened up the Colombian's defense and a one-two dropped Alcorro in the corner. He got up and stumbled and was counted out at 2:36 of the second round for a knockout.

Alcorro, 33, had lasted six rounds against Nate Campbell and Humberto Soto.

"I didn't know he had gone that far against those fighters. That's pretty good," said Antillon. "We found out he was a left-hander about a week ago, but it didn't matter. I've been boxing for 15 years now, you have to be ready for anything."

The Californian lightweight had not fought in the U.S. for more than a year. His last fight took place in Tokyo, Japan where he stopped a Thai boxer in the second round.

"It seems like it's been so long. The waiting has made me very hungry again," Antillon said. "I'm just so motivated."

Antillon is ranked number two by the WBC as a lightweight.

"I'm going to try 130 (pounds) to see how I feel at that weight," said Antillon.

Preliminary bouts

Filipino boxer Bernabe Concepcion (23-1-1, 13 KOs) got off the better punches in the first round as the taller Sal Garcia (14-6-2, 7 KOs) negated his own height by going inside. Concepcion used his speed and power for a ninth round technical knockout victory in a junior featherweight contest.

It looked like Garcia was going to follow Concepcion around the ring like the first round but a solid right hand counter and two left hooks stunned Concepcion.

A three-punch combination closed by a left hook hurt Concepcion in the third round. It was Garcia's best round. Several stiff left jabs set up the combination.

Concepcion unloaded several combinations that seemed to stun Garcia. The East L.A. fighter fired few punches and was moved back by the smaller fighter.

The fifth round saw Garcia beat Concepcion to the punch with a solid right hand that stunned the tough Filipino. Another combination up and down the body by Garcia won him the round.

In the sixth round Garcia landed a left hook flush but let Concepcion take over the round with combinations. Instead of keeping the fight in the middle, Garcia allowed himself to get forced to the ropes where the Filipino boxer unloaded combinations.

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Both fighters landed combinations in the seventh but Concepcion's punches carried the bigger impact.

Concepcion entered the ninth round with what seemed a sizeable lead. Garcia moved in and traded combinations and was caught with a strong left hook that dazed him.

Concepcion immediately walked in to follow up but referee Robert Byrd stopped the fight at 47 seconds of the ninth round.

Glendale's Vanes Martirosyan (16-0, 11 KOs), a former U.S. Olympian, out-boxed Denver's Patrick Thompson (11-10-1, 4 KOs) in a six-round junior middleweight contest.

The speedy boxer-puncher was on his toes the entire bout. He suffered a slight cut on the corner of his left eye, but it wasn't enough to deter him from winning every round on all three judges cards 60-54.

In a junior lightweight bout, undefeated Filipino Mercito Gesta (12-0-1, 4 KOs) dropped Ecuador's Carlos Vinan (7-5-3) in the third round with a left hand. Then finished the job in the fourth in staggering Vinan again with a left. Referee Bayless stopped the one-sided contest at 1:20 of the fourth round for a technical knockout

Las Vegas boxer Angel Flores (9-1, 2 KOs) stopped Oklahoma City's Rick Alexander (7-5, 5 KOs) with a barrage of punches at 2:37 of the second round. Referee Byrd jumped in to end the lightweight bout. Floyd Mayweather trains Flores.