

Hallback And Hernandez Fire It Up

Written by David A. Avila
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TEMECULA-Three world title bouts featuring some of the best female boxers in the world did not disappoint the fans.

The fight of the night featured the super athletic Chevelle Hallback facing off against Bronx fighter Melissa Hernandez for the vacant IFBA lightweight bout. Before more than 1, 400 fans at Pechanga Resort and Casino. They blew the lid off the house.

“That’s what I’m talking about,” screamed Hernandez three times after the final bell.

It didn’t look like the fight would last more than one round as Hallback connected with two punches that seemed to wobble Hernandez. But she survived that round and returned the next round to win that frame with volume punching.

“I know I hurt her a few times,” said Hallback, 36, (25-5-2, 11 KOs). “I was very surprised she took my punches in the first round.”

In the middle of the lightweight title fight, Hernandez received some heavy blows to the body and head, but plowed through each round and managed to steal the judges favor.

With Hernandez swaying the fans approval her way, Hallback suddenly opened up with her best volleys and had her opponent backing up.

The final two rounds saw the bigger Hallback landing big left hooks and uppercuts through Hernandez’s guard, though visibly stunned, the New Yorker fought her way out of danger.

After 10 rounds the judges scored it 97-94, 97-93 and 95-95 for a split decision draw. The title remains vacant because of the draw.

“We can do it again,” said Hallback, who felt she won the fight. “Melissa definitely threw more punches but my punches were much more effective.”

In the welterweight title fight New Mexico’s Holly Holm used her height and reach to keep Puerto Rico’s Belinda Laracuenta (23-18-3) from getting too comfortable. Holm won by unanimous decision after 10 rounds.

“She was a crafty fighter,” said Holm (21-1-2), who was fighting outside of New Mexico for the first time in a while. “It’s always good to face someone who can show you something different.”

Laracuenta dove into action quickly in the first round. With more than 40 professional fights in her resume, she knew exactly what was needed to beat the champion Holm...pressure.

It was obvious that Laracuenta chose to hit the body whenever nothing else was available and

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she did it repeatedly. But Holm used her legs to move in and out of danger and fired jabs to keep the Puerto Rican veteran off balance.

“She was doing a lot of holding,” said Holm, who is often accused herself of using that tactic. “I don’t like to hold. I only do it to avoid head butts.”

Round after round Holm used her reach and a steady supply of combinations to keep Laracuente from fighting inside.

The judges scored it 97-93, 99-91, 98-92 for Holm.

Brown-Sitzes

IFBA junior featherweight Lisa Brown (14-3-3) of Canada successfully defended her title with a unanimous decision over Jeri Sitzes (14-6-1) but you could have fooled the fans, who thought otherwise.

Brown scored a fuzzy-looking knockdown of Sitzes in the ninth round, but it was the Missouri fighter who seemed to land the harder and more effective punches throughout the 10-round title fight.

The final round saw Sitzes land a one-two combination that forced Brown to hold on. When they resumed the Canadian fighter looked unsteady but continued the fight until the final bell. The judges scored it 97-92, 98-91 and 98-93 for Brown. The crowd booed the verdict.

Jennifer “the Razor” Barber immediately absorbed one left hook then went to work with some pretty boxing and razor sharp punching in stopping Arizona’s Handi Hernandez (5-3, 3 KOs) in the third round.

“After the left hook I kept my right hand up and threw my combinations,” said Barber (5-0, 3 KOs).

In the second round Barber landed a three-punch combination that had Hernandez teetering backward. She immediately cornered the Arizona fighter and rained punches on her. For a moment it looked like the referee was going to stop the fight, but he let it go on after Hernandez landed a left hook.

The third round wasn’t so lucky for Hernandez. Barber landed a left hook and saw that her opponent was hurt and piled on the punches. Referee Tony Crebs stopped the fight at 50 seconds into the third round.

“I want three more fights then I want to fight for the world title,” said Barber. “I’m only saying this because I have a lot of amateur fights.”

Former Filipina amateur star Ana Julaton (2-0) used a good stiff left jab to keep San Diego’s Carly Batey (3-3-2) from getting too comfortable and eked out a split-decision win after six

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rounds.

“She was tough,” said Julaton. “I tried to keep busy against her.”

Julaton, who is trained by famed boxing guru Freddie Roach, seemed the heavier puncher and unleashed more combinations.

Batey had her moments too but seemed to warm up a little too late in the first two rounds before scoring with her own combinations.

“Ana landed the heavier punches,” said Roach.

San Diego’s Batey had her best moments in the third round when she quickly stepped to the side and landed a left hook twice to Julaton’s head.