

## Vazquez Beats Marquez In Mexican Firefight

Written by David A. Avila  
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CARSON-After 25 rounds of tight-knit power boxing and numerous knockdowns WBC junior featherweight champion Israel Vazquez emerged the winner with a split-decision victory over fellow Mexico City warrior Rafael Marquez on Saturday.

"I had to make a statement," said Vazquez (43-4, 32 KOs).

It was a Mexican firefight.

The 8,014 boxing fans at the Home Depot Center were riveted by Vazquez and Marquez (37-5, 33 KOs) who showcased their high level professional prizefighting for the third time. Like in the previous two encounters they did not disappoint.

The third fight exceeded all expectations and for the first time both fighters ended on their feet. The previous two fights had ended by knockout for each boxer.

Not this time.

It was their third clash and both Marquez and Vazquez were floored but survived. A point deducted by referee Pat Russell in the 10th round proved to be the deciding factor on one judge's card. But otherwise the fans were awed by the Mexico City fighters.

Marquez started quickly with sharp jabs and combinations, but a left hook seemed to appear from nowhere and stunned the former champion. He rallied at the end of the round but had shaky legs.

In the second round Marquez used his strong left jab to fend off Vazquez. A counter left hook and right hand combination rocked Marquez again.

Marquez refused to step backward and traded precise combinations with Vazquez in the third round. Marquez fired a left hook below the belt and was warned.

The two Mexico city fighters let it all hang out with a blistering fourth round that saw Vazquez knocked down from a right-left-right combination, but Vazquez roared back and hurt Marquez. The two exchanged fiery blows until the bell for the best round of their three fights.

It could be the round of the year.

"Some of those shots stunned me," said Vazquez. "But it did not make me slow down."

Seeking to win back respect Vazquez stepped up the tempo behind a stiff left jab and several combinations. A left hook caught Marquez who retreated briefly.

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In the sixth round three right hands by Vazquez stunned the challenger but he remained upright. A low blow by Marquez forced the referee to warn him again but no point was deducted.

For the first time in three fights both fighters exceeded the seventh round. Marquez found a place for his left hook and stunned Vazquez twice. An overhand right by Vazquez was his best punch but Marquez' left hand took the round.

Marquez looked like he was gaining momentum but a right hand followed by a left hook by Vazquez turned it around. Several more combinations gave the round to Vazquez.

Vazquez seemed to be winning points by staying busier in the ninth round but with 10 seconds left Marquez fired a right hand and two left hooks to stun Vazquez and perhaps steal the round.

A low blow by Marquez in the 10th forced the referee to deduct a point, but a three-punch combo including a snapping uppercut may have given Marquez an even round.

"It wasn't a low blow," insisted Marquez. "I hit him on the beltline."

Referee Pat Russell said he had warned Marquez repeatedly and finally deducted a point that proved to be the difference in the fight on one score card.

"I had to do it," Russell said.

Perhaps realizing he needed every point, Vazquez stormed out of his corner and battered Marquez every second of the round. Marquez seemed surprised by the energy and was knocked down with a three-punch combination. Though his gloves did not touch the canvas the referee correctly ruled the ropes kept him from going completely down.

"I gave it my all," said Vazquez who never stopped punching as he chased Marquez for all three minutes. "I had to make a statement and finish strong."

He needed that round to win the fight on one judge's scorecard. Judge James Jen Kin scored it 113-112 for Vazquez and judge Max DeLuca had it 114-111 for Vazquez too. New Jersey's Tom Kaczmarek tabbed Marquez 114-111.

Though the fight miraculously went the distance, Vazquez proved the better fighter by the slimmest of margins.

"I wanted to prove I was the best," Vazquez said. "Rafael Marquez is a great fighter."

Marquez was greatly disappointed by the decision

"I felt I won," said Marquez. "I'm confident that I will be back."

Marquez was later sent to the Harbor-UCLA Medical Center after complaining of dizziness while in his hotel. After several tests were taken Marquez was deemed fit and released, said Armando

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Garcia, executive director for the California State Athletic Commission.

### Other bouts

Jorge Paez Jr. (19-1, 11 KOs), the son of the popular Mexican champion, knocked out Orange's Tomas Barragan (8-3-1) at 55 seconds of the third round of a junior welterweight bout. A right hand-left-hook-right hand combination from Paez dropped Barragan for good. Referee Ray Corona stopped the fight.

Southpaw junior welterweight Antonio De Marco (18-1-1, 13 KOs) of San Diego was the bigger, faster and stronger fighter but nobody told Mexico's Juan Carlos Martinez (9-6-1). The two traded big blows for eight rounds but De Marco's longer arms gave him the advantage. All three judges scored it for De Marco 78-74 twice and 79-73.

In a bantamweight contest Chris Avalos (2-0) used a couple of right hands to force a technical knockout over Salinas-based Constancio Alvarado (2-1-3) at 2:23 of the first round. Referee Raul Caiz Jr. stopped the fight.

Riverside's Michael Franco (10-0, 7 KOs) proved his hype is right on with a devastating knockout of Colorado's Ernie Marquez (6-3-1) at 2:57 of the first round. A right hand turned Marquez around and a left hook had dropped Marquez earlier.