

Juan Manuel Marquez KO's Casamayor

Written by David A. Avila

Saturday, 13 September 2008 19:00

LAS VEGAS-Mexico's Juan Manuel Marquez saved the day for his countrymen and for Mexican pride with a knockout victory over Cuba's Joel Casamayor to win the Ring lightweight title on Saturday and save the party for Mexican Independence weekend.

Until Marquez stopped Casamayor (36-4-1, 22 KOs), the majority of the 7,882 fans at the MGM Grand witnessed a number of Mexican fighters get clobbered. But Marquez proved a savior to the delight of the roaring crowd, many of them Mexican fans.

Originally Oscar De La Hoya was scheduled to fight Floyd Mayweather Jr. but that fight was scrapped and Marquez-Casamayor was inserted. It was a good move.

"I wanted to win the fight for all of my Mexican fans," said Marquez (49-4-1, 36 KOs) who fights out of Mexico City. "We moved up in weight to fight Casamayor. I'll fight whoever my promoter wants me to fight."

Marquez opened the fight with a sizzling four-punch combination, but Casamayor scored with some counter lefts and used his bag of tricks to keep Marquez from countering in the first round.

By the fourth round it was obvious that Marquez had the hand speed advantage, but Casamayor's guile kept the Mexican boxer from jumping in. A lazy right jab by the Cuban fighter was sent several times as a lure but Marquez would not bite.

"I threw a lot of combinations because I knew I could not win the fight with one punch at a time," said Marquez who passed his first test at 135 pounds. "I knew how to neutralize his left hand."

Casamayor used the eighth round to land several counter left hands flush. But he still couldn't land a combination against the Mexican.

The Cuban fighter's formula of counter left hands was working so he mixed in some head butts to go with it. Though Marquez landed some left hooks, it was Casamayor's solid left hand counter that won the ninth round.

Marquez won the 10th round big with some nifty right hand combinations and a stiff left jab that snapped Casamayor's head back. Instead of countering Marquez attacked more and reaped the dividends.

In the 11th round a four-punch combo finalized by a right hand to the chin dropped Cuba's Casamayor for the first time in the fight. He beat the count and attempted to hold on but the Mexican fighter managed to unravel himself and proceeded to force Casamayor into a 17-punch exchange that resulted in another right hand to the chin and down Casamayor went for good as referee Tony Weeks stopped the fight at 2:55 of the round.

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"I was the more intelligent fighter," said Marquez who captured his third world title. "I figured he would be a difficult fight."

Judges Paul Smith and Patricia Jarman had it 95-95 going into the 11th round and judge Glenn Feldman had it 97-93 for Marquez. But the two knockdowns ultimately decided the fight.

The scorecards showed that another controversial decision could have ensued but Marquez settled the question with his two surprising knockdowns over the usually granite chinned Casamayor.

"Joel is a great counter-puncher," said Marquez. "I figured it out."

The Cuban fighter had never been stopped and was emotional at the conclusion.

"He fought like a great champion," said Casamayor who suffered his first knockout defeat. "Marquez was the best tonight."

Other bouts

A 37-year-old Vernon Forrest left hook tumbled WBC junior middleweight titleholder Sergio Mora for a knockdown in the seventh round and it was all downhill for the boxer from Georgia who reclaimed the WBC junior middleweight title.

All three judges scored it overwhelmingly for Forrest, 119-109, 117-110, 119-108.

Forrest (41-3, 29 KOs) was beaten in June by Mora who attacked the body and wore him down. But in the rematch Forrest used a stiff jab and rarely allowed the East Los Angeles boxer to land effective body punches.

"Tonight was boxing 101, jab, jab, jab," said Forrest who is also a former welterweight world champion. "In the last fight I had a bad night, I was flat."

Mora (21-1-1), who was two pounds overweight and forced to shed the weight on Friday, said the shorter period to prepare (six weeks instead of 10) teetered him off his regular timetable.

"This guy is old, I should have won," said Mora, 27.

Oxnard's Victor Ortiz proved too powerful for Argentina's sturdy Roberto Arrieta and pounded him out in five rounds including three knockdowns. It was a right hook followed by the left hand that dropped Arrieta for good at 2:25 of the fifth round as referee Jay Nady stopped the fight for a technical knockout victory for Ortiz.

Last-minute replacement Danny Perez of San Diego thoroughly out-boxed Mexico's knockout artist Julio "Baby Face" Garcia in a 10-round super middleweight contest. A left hook to the body in the second round spelled doom for Garcia who never could get into gear after that blow. All three judges scored it for Perez 100-90, 99-91, 97-93.

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"I took two years off and feel ready to go," said Perez, who fought and won last July. "I feel blessed."

Newly signed Daud Yordan of Indonesia engaged in his first fight in America against rugged Mexican featherweight Antonio Meza. It wasn't easy for Yordan who traded big bombs with Meza for eight rounds with neither fighter giving ground. Yordan landed the better combinations and won a majority decision 76-76, 78-74 twice.

Brooklyn's Daniel Jacobs (9-0, 9 KOs) didn't get much of a test against Pacoima's Ramon Espinoza (10-8, 4 KOs). The first time he touched the California boxer he knocked him down. A Jacobs right hand sent Espinoza down a second time for good at 1:04 forcing referee Gibson to stop the middleweight fight after 57 seconds in the first round.

Philadelphia's Danny Garcia (7-0, 6 KOs) didn't waste time against Tennessee's Ty Wiggins (9-23-1), he didn't even want to shake hands. Instead he fired a big right hand, then followed Wiggins around until landing a double left hook to the body and head for a knockout at 1:04 of the first round. Referee Toby Gibson stopped the junior welterweight fight.

Puerto Rican featherweight Carlos Velasquez (9-0, 8 KOs) stormed through Mexico City veteran boxer Jose Navarrette (12-18-2, 5 KOs) for four rounds and finally fired a withering barrage for a knockdown at 1:11 of the fifth round. Referee Robert Byrd asked the Mexican fighter if he wanted to continue and he apparently said no.