CABAZON-A battle between speed and precision ended in a knockout victory for Vicente Escobedo against Dominic Salcido who was leading in the fight until sloppy defense left him open for a big left hook.

All three judges had Salcido ahead 49-46, 48-47 and 49-46.

No matter, Escobedo realized it would be fundamentals that would give him the advantage in the end.

For six rounds more than 700 shouting fans saw a sizzling fight that looked like Salcido was going to run away with the victory as he landed numerous combinations that seemed to freeze Escobedo. But Escobedo, who is trained by Nacho Beristain, had a plan.

“I was worried at the beginning because he was getting his rhythm,” said Escobedo (19-1, 12 KOs), the former U.S. Olympian from Woodland. “But I knew I could get him with a good shot and hurt him.”

Escobedo spent most of the first three minutes of the fight adjusting to the Rialto fighter’s blazing hands. But in the second round Escobedo used a steady jab and a left hook that stunned his opponent. That left hook would prove to be the decisive weapon.

For several rounds the lightning combinations fired by Salcido seemed to be coming in overwhelming fashion as Escobedo kept in a tight defensive guard. Little by little the hands began to drop from Salcido’s guard.

Salcido stepped into another gear in the fifth round behind a steady jab and he was firing multiple combinations. A left hook by Salcido was the best punch of the round and it looked like he was going to overrun Escobedo.

While Salcido fired multiple punches with his guard down Escobedo fired a perfect left hook that sent the Rialto fighter reeling across the ring. Escobedo chased him and fired a left-right left combination that dropped Salcido in the neutral corner. He survived that knockdown but couldn’t survive another barrage of punches by Escobedo, forcing referee David Mendoza to stop the fight 42 seconds into the sixth round.

“When I knocked him down I was surprised he got up,” said Escobedo. “It was my jabs and counterpunching that was the difference.”

Salcido suffered his first loss as a pro.

“I was overconfident,” said Salcido, 24, (16-1, 8 KOs). “I was just getting started.”

Eric Gomez, matchmaker for Golden Boy Promotions, said Escobedo may fight former world champion Carlos “Famoso” Hernandez next.

Other bouts

Montebello’s Nestor Rocha (20-1, 7 KOs) needed only one round to discover his left uppercut would be a powerful weapon against Puerto Rico’s Javier Cintron (14-11-2, 10 KOs). After two knockdowns in the second round another left uppercut dropped the heavy-hitter for good at 1:24. Referee Tony Crebs stopped the junior featherweight fight.

Paramount’s Charles Huerta (7-0, 4 KOs) finally stepped into the mold that people expected of him and knocked out Puerto Rico’s Efrain Perez (2-3, 2 KOs) with a left hook to the chin at 1:32 of the first round of a junior lightweight contest. Referee David Mendoza counted out Perez.

“I didn’t look like a sparring partner today,” said Huerta who had been unimpressive in previous performances. “I did the job and used my jab.”

Demetrio Soto (5-0, 4 KOs) of Los Angeles was after his fifth knockout in five bouts but San Fernando’s Mario Cortez (2-6-2) used his head literally and accompanied that with a mugging offense to survive the four round junior welterweight battle. All three judges scored it for Soto 39-36 twice and 38-37. Soto dropped Cortez in the first round during an exchange with a right hand.

Puerto Rico’s Hector Sanchez (15-0, 6 KOs) stopped Mexico’s Humberto Tapia (13-8-1, 7 KOs) at 2:52 of the second round of a junior welterweight bout.

A heavyweight bout ended in a win for San Francisco’s Ashanti Jordan (6-0, 5 KOs) who used his quickness to outscore Huntington Beach’s John Clark (12-14-1) over six rounds. The judges scored it 60-54.