

Argentina's Maidana Wins Air War Over Ortiz

Written by David A. Avila
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Bing! Bang! Boom!

Junior welterweight contenders Marcos Maidana and Victor Ortiz erupted with laser bombs, nitro and any other explosives they could gather against each other. In the end, the Argentine had too much firepower in winning the WBA interim title on Saturday.

An estimated 8,000 fans gathered at Staples Center to watch the coronation of a new Southern California star but Ortiz was tripped up by the upstart from down South America way in a fast and frenetic power fest.

In six rounds there were a total of five knockdowns: three by Ortiz and two by Maidana. The last one ended the fight in the Argentine's favor.

Oxnard's Ortiz gambled on his might and lost before mostly supportive fans at Staples Center but Maidana (26-1, 25 KOs) simply had a little too much firepower and took the WBA interim junior welterweight title in the process.

"He packs some power," said Ortiz (24-2-1, 19 KOs) who was fighting in his first main event at a large venue. "I wasn't in the zone tonight."

The power exchange began tentatively with Maidana feinting and feinting then finally letting go with a right hand that landed. That proved the recipe for victory.

In that first round Ortiz caught the muscular Argentine fighter with a right hook to the chin and down he went. When the fight resumed Ortiz moved quickly in to finish the fight and was caught with an overhand right and he was dropped with a thud. He survived.

"I usually keep composed and tonight I wasn't," said Ortiz. "I thought I could hurt him, and I thought I could knock him out."

In the second round Ortiz moved in with more aggression and found another opening for his lethal right hook. Maidana slumped to the floor, got up, slumped back to the floor to regain more time and it seemed the fight might end. It was just the beginning.

"I went down but I got up and gave it all I had," said Maidana whose only previous loss was to current WBA champion Andriy Kotelnik. "After that, I knew I could win this fight."

After four knockdowns in the first three rounds, both fighters fought more cautiously with Maidana reverting to well-timed right hands. One of those zingers staggered Ortiz at the end of the third round.

Still hurting from that last right hand, Ortiz seemed intent on turning things around and landed a

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right uppercut that seemed to freeze Maidana's legs. Ortiz's right hand proved effective in the fourth round.

The fifth round saw some savage punching by both fighters at the beginning of the round. But a cut over the right eye of Ortiz seemed to spur Maidana on as he landed several thunderous right hands that snapped the Oxnard fighter's head back. Swelling erupted on the left eye of Ortiz.

With both of Ortiz's eyes damaged, Maidana wasted little time and attacked with yet another right hand. Several body shots sent the Oxnard fighter to the ground and when he rose referee Raul Caiz Sr. motioned the ringside doctor to check the fighter. Dr. Paul Wallace signaled an end to the fight 46 seconds into the sixth round.

"I came to finish him and that's what happened," said Maidana. "He hits very hard but doesn't have a good chin."

Ortiz stood hanging over the ropes at the end of the fight listening to jeering fans. It was the first time he had suffered a loss in years.

"Tonight, he was the best man," said Ortiz. "My trainer told me what to do. We had a plan and I didn't listen to them. He was the better fighter tonight."

At the end of the fifth round, all three judges had Ortiz ahead due to the three knockdowns he scored. Judges Marty Denkin, David Mendoza and Cesar Ramos had Ortiz ahead 48-45. Ultimately it was Maidana's power that short fused any decision.

Both fighters hugged at the post fight press conference and Ortiz hugged the Argentine and reiterated that he indeed lost. But he also said he never wanted the fight to stop. When the ringside physician examined him Ortiz confessed that while he was attempting to say the knockdown was a slip, he stumbled a bit and the doctor immediately looked at him and stopped the fight.

"I can't lie, I was hurt," Ortiz said. "I could have fought on, but what can I say if the doctor stops the fight? Nothing."

Maidana said he hopes a rematch can be made.

"Now I know how to fight him," Maidana said.

Preliminaries

Lightweight prospect Adrien Broner (10-0, 7 KOs) landed a perfect left uppercut between the gloves of Australia's William Kickett (15-2, 5 KOs) for a sudden knockout at 2:58 of the sixth round. Both fighters were polished and precise with their punches. The beginning of the end for Kickett was in the fifth round when he was dropped by Broner's left hook. The crowd was pleased with the knockout and with Broner's acrobatics following the win.

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In another lightweight preliminary, New Jersey's Mike Perez (3-0-1) scored a unanimous decision win over Arizona's scrappy Thomas Herrera (2-2-1) after four rounds. Perez had the size advantage and landed some good shots but just couldn't stop Herrera. In the last round Herrera nearly dropped Perez but two judges didn't give the Arizona fighter a single round. Two judges scored it 40-36 and one judge 39-37, all for Perez.

The opening bout of the Staples Center card featured two junior middleweights looking to notch a victory. After four rounds, Mexico's Jaime Orrantia (11-23-4) and San Diego's Sergio De La Torre (11-11-3) fought to a majority draw with one judge scoring 39-37 for De La Torre and two judges scoring it 38-38 for a draw. Neither fighter was able to take control of the fight that saw Orrantia suffer a cut over left eye.