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LOS ANGELES-Carlos Molina lost his original opponent but found granite chinned John Figueroa tough enough to give him a test on Thursday.

Molina was sharp and powerful against Puerto Rico's Figueroa (7-8-3) who stepped in at Club Nokia to replace Oxnard's David Rodela who was injured in a car accident. It didn't matter to Molina.

"I was a little disappointed David Rodela couldn't fight me," said Molina who celebrated his birthday during his fight. "But Figueroa is a tough guy."

Molina (14-0, 7 KOs) opened up with some sizzling check left hooks that had Figueroa reeling. But after the first two rounds the Puerto Rican began to adjust to Molina and tried several methods of attack including fighting inside. It didn't work.

While fighting inside Molina was able to time Figueroa's punches and land some blistering left uppercuts. Molina took most of the first five rounds.

Figueroa was most effective in the fourth round when he took the fight outside again and began top attack Molina's body. After several successful attacks downstairs he went upstairs and connected with right hand leads. One counter left hook exploded on Figueroa's chin but he took it and won the round.

From the fifth round on it was all Molina was opened up with some stiff left jabs and lightning combinations. Blow after blow was landing perfectly but Figueroa rarely wobbled.

All three judges scored it for Molina 78-74, 79-73, 79-72.

"He gave me a hell of a fight," said Molina.

Semi-main

Ivan Redkach (5-0, 4 KOs), a junior welterweight, won by disqualification over Carlos Hernandez (3-5-2) of San Fernando at 1:28 of the third round. Redkach was caught with a counter right hand in the first round but found the range for his left uppercuts and right hooks. Hernandez repeatedly hit during the break and was eventually disqualified.

Other bouts

Despite a huge height disadvantage New Mexico's Fidel Maldonado (6-0, 5 KOs)beat very tall Northern California's Luis Sanchez (0-4) after four rounds in a junior welterweight contest. Maldonado used his speed to offset Sanchez longer reach. Both suffered knockdowns in the first round but Maldonado found his range to win by unanimous decision 39-37 twice and 39-36.

East L.A.'s Ramon Valadez (4-1) won by unanimous decision against Wilmington's Ramon Flores (3-9-1) in a lightweight bout after four rounds. Judges scored it 40-36.

Fairfield's Manuel Avila was sharper and stronger in beating gritty Alexis Hernandez of Las Vegas by unanimous decision. Both fighters made their pro debut. Avila got the decision 40-36 on all three cards.

Santa Ana's Sal Rios (2-1) won a hard-fought four round split-decision over East L.A.'s Gerardo Melendrez (0-2-1) in a welterweight clash. Two judges scored it 38-37 for Rio and one 38-37 for Melendrez.

Amateurs

Montebello's Seniesa Estrada out-scored Fresno's Shanne Ruelas with well-timed combinations in a flyweight bout. Estrada plans to seek spot on the U.S. Olympic team and will fight in the U.S. P.A.L.s this coming January.

Duarte's Luis Seldano edged Maywood's Luis Bello in a close lightweight bout that saw both fighters land hard shots. The back and fight bout saw boxers score with heavy shots. The taller Bello fought best when using his reach but was caught in between combinations often.

Santa Ana's Robert Galvan won a decision over Long Beach's Julian Cruz in a super middleweight bout.