ANAHEIM-Despite a rather small crowd it was big time action as champions Humberto Soto, Nonito Donaire and contender Miguel Garcia struck lightning while entertaining the crowd on Saturday.

WBC lightweight titleholder Soto (54-7-2, 32 KOs) and challenger Urbano Antillon (28-2, 20 KOs) cracked each other relentlessly in a back and forth battle in the main event in front of more than 3,200 fans at the Honda Center. No doubt, the fans at the arena witnessed one of the top actions fights in the past 12 months.

“The main event is going to be one of the fights considered the fight of the year,” said Bob Arum of Top Rank.

How right he is.

From the opening bell the two let loose with vicious blows. Antillon was intent on landing to the body while Soto preferred the uppercut. It was the formula for the entire 12 rounds.

The referee deducted a point from Antillon for a low blow in the fifth round and that proved to be the difference. But for the entire fight both Soto and Antillon punished each other in a contest that swayed back and forth.

“We knew he was going to come at us all night,” said Soto. “We knew it (the uppercut) was going to be the key.”

In the sixth round a blistering body attack by Antillon seemed to knock the wind out of Soto. At that point it looked like he might crumble from the blows but he rallied.

“Sometimes you have to fight. I never expected that he would take everything I had.

This fight was real tough,” Soto said.

The judges scored it a close but unanimous decision for Soto 115-112 and 114-113 twice.

Antillon was disappointed but grateful.

“I said what I was going to do and that’s what I did,” Antillon said. “We expected exactly what it was. I got hit a little a couple of times but we did what we planned to do.”

Nonito

Nonito “Filipino Flash” Donaire (25-1, 17 KOs) blew by Ukrainian fighter Vladimir Sidorenko (22-3-2, 7 KOs) with three knock downs before finally stopping him at 1:48 of the fourth round of

a bantamweight fight.

“I didn’t even go to my plan the counter hooks are always going to be me. Big respect for Sidorenko. I knew that I hurt him but much respect for him,” said Donaire. “They told me to stay back not to get too wild.”

Donaire showed why many consider him one of the top prizefighters pound for pound in the world with total domination over former champion Vladimir Sidorenko in a bantamweight title fight.

The Filipino Flash floored the Ukrainian fighter three times and had him bloodied after the first round.

In round three a counter left hook caught Sidorenko perfectly and dropped the Russian fighter. He got up again.

“I didn’t even go to my plan the counter hooks are always going to be me. Big respect for Sidorenko. I knew that I hurt him but much respect for him,” said Donaire. “They told me to stay back not to get too wild.”

Left hands dropped Sidorenko the first two times but a right hand finished the job at 1:48 of the fourth round. The Ukrainian fighter shook his head as the referee counted him out.

He was clearly in pain.

“This was by far my best performance. The (Vic) Darchinyan was just one punch,” said Donaire. “I was really motivated for this fight because I really wanted to win. I wanted to show I can dominate.”

Even his very critical trainer was impressed.

“He did everything perfectly,” said trainer Robert Garcia.

Donaire is now scheduled to fight WBA bantamweight titleholder Fernando Montiel of Mexico.

“I’m excited. Fernando Montiel I’m coming for you. People want to see that fight,” Donaire said. “That’s beautiful that I have Mexican fans and Filipino fans. I’ll do my best for the fans.”

Garcia

Riverside’s Garcia (24-0, 20 KOs) and Canada’s Olivier Lontchi (18-2-2, 8 KOs) started their fight slowly and carefully, but in round four the featherweight contender showed why he’s considered one of the promising fighters in the featherweight division.

Garcia began to attack Lontchi’s body and the Canadian’s defense began to unravel. A quick one-two combination floored Lontchi who seemed surprised. He got up and was immediately

attacked by the Riverside boxer who unleashed a blistering six-punch combination to the head and body. Lontchi slumped to the floor and did not beat the count of 10 for a knockout at 1:30 of the seventh round.

“I felt real good real strong I knew he was going to move around so I was patient with him,” said Garcia. “Once I hit him with a right hand I knew I had him.”

Other bouts

In a match between replacement fighters it was Poland’s Pawel Wolak (28-1, 18 KOs) who took the win by technical knockout over Mexico’s Jose Pinzon (19-2-1, 12 KOs) at 2:24 of round seven. It was an unpopular stoppage. Pinzon had knocked down Wolak with a vicious left hook in the second round but punched himself out trying to finish the Polish fighter. In the end, he made a serious mistake and Wolak emerged the victor in the middleweight contest.

“I came down for a beat down,” said Wolak who survived a knockdown to win. “I never would have surrendered.”

Pinzon felt “I was winning the fight. I just didn’t finish him.”

Mexico’s Rodrigo Garcia (8-0, 6 KOs) walked in with all of the advantages against Texas boxer Rodrigo Villarreal (4-5-1) including speed, height and power. But Villarreal gritted it out for three rounds until walking into a left hook at 2:32 of the round.

Mexican heavyweight Andy Ruiz (7-0, 5 KOs) showed why people are talking about his talent. Three knockdowns of Francisco Diaz (2-5) were impressive, but his hand speed was bewildering. The end came at 1:08 of round two. Right hand did the job for new heavyweight sensation Ruiz who is trained by Freddie Roach.

Indio’s Gabino Saenz (2-0, 2 KOs) waited about a minute before opening up with the heavy stuff. A right lead followed by a left hook floored San Bernardino’s Jesse Adame (1-6). He survived. Then during an exchange a Saenz counter left uppercut dropped Adame for good at 2:45 of the first round in the junior lightweight bout. Referee Wayne Hedgepeth stopped the fight.

Heavyweight Joe Hanks (15-0, 10 KOs) won by technical knockout at 1:43 of the fourth round against Vili Bloomfield (9-6-1, 4 KOs). Hanks cornered Bloomfield and let the punches fly. Though Bloomfield was not hurt he did not fire back and referee Jerry Cantu stopped the fight.

Santa Ana’s Jesse Roman (5-0-3, KOs) won by unanimous decision against Las Vegas fighter Johnny Frazier (3-4-2, 3 KOs) after four rounds of a lightweight fight. It was a close fight for all four rounds but the judges scored it 40-36 twice and 39-37 for Roman. No knockdowns.