Ah, Las Vegas. One of my favorite places in the world to be for one night. One of my least favorite places in the world to be for five nights.

For the second time in a span of eight weeks, I survived five days and nights of the Vegas fight-week experience, this time to cover Manny Pacquiao-Juan Manuel Marquez III as the primary blogger for HBO.com. I'm a physical wreck, I'm burnt out on writing about boxing, and the caffeine and the alcohol are saying all manner of nasty things about one another as they jockey for position in my bloodstream. But duty for TSS calls, so here is Part I of another A-to-Z rundown of the fight week experience:

A is for Alvarado

What boxing fan didn't fall head over heels in love with Mike Alvarado on Saturday night? The dude lost each of the first five rounds against Breidis Prescott on my scorecard, was bleeding profusely out of myriad holes on the inside and outside of his face, and then started coming on. I finally gave him a round in the sixth. Thought he eked out the seventh too. Then he took the eighth and ninth as Prescott faded. And finally Alvarado dropped and stopped Prescott with just over a minute remaining in the final round, as inspiring a come-from-behind victory as we've seen all year. Deservedly so, "Alvarado" was trending on Twitter afterward. If it's good enough to trend on Twitter, it's good enough to earn the "A" in this article.

B is for "Berry, Berry Hard"

No, "Berry, Berry Hard" is not some weird new fruity drink I enjoyed at the Rouge bar at MGM Grand. It's how Marquez claimed to have trained for this fight when he stepped up to the podium at the final prefight press conference. Meanwhile, a runner-up for the letter "B": Bart Barry. I had the pleasure of meeting my fellow Monday morning boxing columnist on Saturday, and I can attest that he's as fine a chap as he is a writer.

C is for Counterpunching & Controversy

These were the key words coming out the Pacquiao-Marquez fight, and they really go together because it seems you can't get rewarded these days for outboxing a guy without moving forward. I scored the fight 116-112 for Marquez. Admittedly, about nine of the 12 rounds were a challenge to score. So I'm not going to say that Pacquiao getting the decision is all-time heist. But I still feel pretty strongly that the judges blew it and gave the victory to the wrong guy. Marquez did what he wanted to do, and it was all based around his mastery as a counterpuncher. Pacquiao did very little of what he wanted to do, because he was concerned from the start (rightfully so) about getting countered. But the judges apparently gave the majority of the close rounds to the guy who was "making the fight." To my eyes, they rewarded ineffective aggression. It's a little like scoring a basketball game based on shots taken. Call me crazy, but I score it based on shots that go in the little orange hoop, and regardless of what the CompuBox stats said, Marquez had the edge in that department. Hey, if you had it a draw or thought Pacquiao won by a point or two, I can see where you're coming from. But in my opinion, Marquez has more of a right to complain about this decision than either of the first two.

D is for Desert Storm

I hated the Tim Bradley-Joel Casamayor matchup from the moment it was signed, but given that nobody ever looks great against Casamayor (except maybe Marquez a few years back), “Desert Storm” turned in a strong performance, getting the old man out of there in eight rounds instead of letting the ugliness last for the full 12. I bumped into Bradley at the airport on my way out of town and said as much to him, and he seemed to appreciate it after hearing a lot of boos the night before. I know that fans at home and in the arena weren’t happy and that it was by far the worst fight on the card, but I don’t think any of that should be held against Bradley.

E is for ESPN’s Hot Button

The boxing editor at ESPN.com, Jason Langendorf, emailed me mid-week looking for someone to take a pro-Marquez position for the website’s “Hot Button” debate, so I obliged because I believed all along this fight would be competitive. Take a moment and check it out for yourself if you haven’t read it: http://espn.go.com/boxing/hot . I guess the Hot Button score is Raskin 1, Rafael 0. How dare he challenge me with his primitive skills?

F is for Frazier

The story of the week, outside of Pacquiao-Marquez, was the death of the great Joe Frazier, a Philly legend whom I had the honor of interviewing at length back in 1998 and then hanging out with at the airport as we endured flight delays together a couple of years later. Bill Dettloff, who knew Frazier—as a fighter and as a man—better than I did, paid tribute to him quite well on last week’s Grantland Network episode of Ring Theory (http://espn.go.com/espnradio/play?id=7217101), and I can’t top what Bill said, so I won’t try. You know who else can’t top Bill’s tribute? Michael Buffer. “Chiseled ebony steel”—really, Mike? For the last time, I’m begging you, just read what it says on the index cards.

G is for Glenn Trowbridge

By my rough estimate, about 70 percent of the ringside media had Marquez winning, 25 percent scored it a draw, and five percent went for Pac-Man. But even among that five percent, nobody I spoke to was cool with Trowbridge's 116-112 scorecard in Pacquiao's favor. As the scores were about to be announced, I foolishly believed Marquez was going to get the nod. The 114-114 made me nervous. The 115-113 did nothing to ease my nerves. But when the 116-112 card was read, I relaxed. "Okay," I thought. "They got it right. There's no possible way anyone gave Pacquiao eight rounds, so Marquez is evening the series at 1-1-1." Turns out I let my guard down, and Glenn Trowbridge sucker punched me.

H is for Home Sweet Home

I wish I could tell you that after my five days in Vegas, home sweet home was precisely where I was headed. But instead, I'm writing this column from a hotel room in Chicago, where I'm spending this entire week training for a new job. So when it's all said and done, I'll have been away from my wife and kids for 10 consecutive days. I can't wait to get home and catch up on my DVR'd programming. I mean, uh, I can't wait to get home and give everyone hugs and kisses. Bottom line: I can't wait to get home. Ten days is a long friggin' time. I am officially a hypocrite for ragging on Chad Dawson for dumping Emanuel Steward because Dawson didn't want to go away to training camp.

I is for InsideHBOBoxing.com

That is the web address at which you can find all of HBO work from last week: Twelve blog posts, a prefight feature, and a postfight recap. I know what you're thinking right now: How many of the 26 letters of the alphabet can Raskin use to plug himself?

J is for Jalen Rose

We now graduate from gratuitous plugging to shameless name dropping. I had the pleasure of briefly chatting with my fellow Grantland Network podcaster Rose, who generally knows his stuff about boxing and is as affable and approachable as they come. Also, I'm no college basketball expert, but I think there might have been a minor factual inaccuracy in Buffer referring to him at

Friday's weigh-in as "UNLV and NBA star Jalen Rose." At least we didn't have to hear which ebony material Rose is made out of. (Meanwhile, Rose wasn't the only "J.R." I had the pleasure of meeting, as I also spent a little time with TheSweetScience.com's own Joe Rein. Another true gentleman, and another person who I'm pretty sure didn't play hoops at UNLV.)

K is for Kenny Bayless

I've been a mark for Bayless for over a decade, generally calling him the best referee in the business, and on Saturday night I met him in person for the first time. I don't have much to report about the experience, really. I just couldn't come up with anything better for the letter "K." But while I'm on the subject of referees, both Jay Nady (excellent stoppage in the Alvarado-Prescott fight) and Vic Drakulich (good point deduction in the Bradley-Casamayor fight) did a superb job on Saturday. In related news, Nicolas Cage's next action movie will be outstanding, Andy Reid is about to master clock management, and the next issue of The Ring won't contain a single typo.

L is for Laurente

The star of the off-TV undercard (which, admittedly, didn't really have anyone else resembling a star) was 34-year-old Filipino welterweight Dennis Laurente, who seemed to be headed nowhere five years ago but has now won 17 straight, including an entertaining seventh-round knockout of Ayi Bruce on Saturday. The best moment came when Laurente finally knocked Bruce down, and instead of watching the ref count over Bruce, he turned his back on the two of them and blew kisses to the crowd. Then he did a rather graceless but nonetheless enjoyable leaping 360 twirl as the count of 10 was reached. I wouldn't mind seeing Laurente on U.S. television at some point in the near future.

M is for Mexicans on Twitter

At the postfight press conference, when Bob Arum was asked to respond to the fact that most people on Twitter were complaining that Marquez got robbed, Arum somehow came up with the explanation that everyone on Twitter is Mexican. Seriously. Sometimes I wonder how someone so smart can be so, you know, not smart.

Check back tomorrow for Part II, where I'll tackle the back half of the alphabet, plug some more stuff, and let you know whether everyone who uses 4Square is Peruvian.

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Comment on this article

Don Quixote says:

Inside the ring is where one differentiates the elite fighters from the average ones. And I am talking about the Bradley/Casamayor fight as opposed to the Marquez/Pacquiao one. In the former you see excessive holding and this "tactic" makes a boring fight hence unmarketable fighters. There were just a few, maybe, necessary brief holdings in the latter fight, hence the elite and marketable ones. These average fighters, e.g., Bradley and Casamayor will always have that awful style of boxing; I wouldn't even call average, mediocre could be a more appropriate term, IMO.