Written by Michael Woods
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Emmanuel Lucero came to the ring at Resorts Casino wearing a luchador mask, a Mexican wrestling mask, and that was apt. He had no problem hugging Patrick Hyland, leading with his head and employing other tactics frowned upon in the rulebook and at home in the WWE. But Lucero, while a tough nut to crack, is at this point a spoiler type, someone who can give a contender rounds and make him sweat in doing so. Hyland stayed undefeated, by scores of 77-75, 78-74, 79-73 in the main event, which was the debut event for Team Snooki Boxing, in Atlantic City on Saturday night.

The diminutive diva of reality TV was in the house at Resorts, watching the action while dad Andy Polizzi and promoter Mike Pascale did the nuts and bolts work. The event was dubbed “The Irish Invasion” because the three Hyland brothers, Patrick, Paul and Eddie, had spots on the seven-bout card. Note to hater: this was no lark, no joke, no stunt for MTV. This was a real club show, and a darned decent debut in a tough biz.

Hyland (24-0 entering, with 11 KOs; age 28) was 129 pounds on Friday, while Lucero (26-8-1 with 14 KOs; from Mexico), who has a 2003 loss to Manny Pacquiao on his record, was 128.

In the first, the ex Irish featherweight champion enjoyed a several inch height advantage. Lucero posed and popped a few times, as he tried to avoid the Dubliner’s strafing shots. The jab

kept Lucero at bay when Hyland used it. He mostly employed power shots, however. Lucero tried to lead with his head several times but Hyland was wise to that. In the third, Lucero landed a long looper right, but that was all the O he enjoyed. He's a canny boxer, though, and is skilled at avoiding contact. The Irishman roared at Lucero after the round. In round five, Lucero's pop had waned. Left hooks tagged Lucero in the last third of the round. Patrick, who is trained by ex super feather champ Tracy Harris Patterson, started the sixth with combos. But Lucero hung tough. Which is what he's known for.

In round seven, ref Sammy Viruet warned Lucero for being chippy, and than Hyland for the same. They engaged in much infighting. In the eighth, Patrick scored with a sweet right uppercut as Lucero came forward. The two engaged furiously to the final bell. Solid scrap. We'd go to the card.

Derric Rossy (age 31; 229 pounds) took on Livin Castillo (age 35; 216 ½ pounds) in a heavyweight tangle. It was no Ali-Frazier, but Rossy had to be happy to get back in the win column, after he heard scores of 78-74 times three, in his favor. The lefty from Ecuador came in at 16-10, Rossy 25-5. He clanged home some lefts in the first, which Rossy took just fine. Rossy came in having lost three straight, to Eddie Chambers, 11-0 Kubrat Pulev and Maurice Harris, aged 35. Good for him for sticking with the game during a difficult stretch…

In the third, they threw bombs early. Rossy looked to pump a jab to interrupt Castillo's flow. He dodged straight lefts smartly. Castillo was hurt in the fourth, but he cleared the cobwebs. The pace slowed in the fifth. Then Rossy backed Castillo up and hurled combos, giving the crowd a surge. Rossy did enough, which is to say not a whole helluva lot, but certainly more than Castillo, to convince the judges that he deserved the W in the later rounds. The power lefts were fewer and farther in between by Castillo by round seven. This was no barnburner, but both men gave ample effort.

Paul Hyland (20-2 entering) met Arturo Santiago (7-4-1 entering; from Puerto Rico) in a super bantamweight bout set for six or fewer rounds. Paul moved smartly, struck with both hands, and was the classier boxer in the first, all the way to the sixth and final round. The judges weighed in for Hyland, via scores of 58-56, 59-55, 58-56.

Art looked to be more aggressive in the second. Didn't much work—Paul's quicker hands and footwork were of a higher caliber. Paul caught Art coming in with a left hook, showing timing extraordinaire to start the third. Art landed a sharp right with Paul on the ropes late in the round.

The underdog wasn't going to go without a fight. In round four, Paul used his ring generalship to get the round. He knows he doesn't have the pop to do much more than trifle a foe so he does what he has to do to win rounds. Things went the same to the finish, with Art getting a little chippy with butts. All in all, a decent stay busy win for I'il Hyland, as his people lobby to get him higher up the rankings lists. After, Hyland told TSS that he was happy with his showing. He said he wanted to get the rounds in, and never tried to show power, because he wanted to shed rust. Down the line, he said he'd like to fight Guillermo Rigondeaux. "I'd just have to look out for his left to the body is all," he said. He said his left hand was a bit tender, so he quit using the jab as much midway through.

Eddie Hyland (16-1 entering; ex Irish super bantam champ; age 27, the youngest of the boxing brothers) took on Franklin Gonzalez (14-9 entering) in a tweener bout, as he was 157.8 and Gonzalez 149 on Friday. After four, the judges spoke: 39-37, 39-37, 40-36, all for Gonzalez. Eddie got stung with a straight left and we smelled upset in the first. Eddie was fighting at lightweight a year and a half ago, and he looked better suited for that class. G went to the body, a nice idea, and Eddie looked a lil gassed after the first. The lefty G caused swelling on the left eye in the second. Eddie got a second wind in the second, and in a tight round, he scored some solid blows. He raised his hands as he walked back to his corner. G stuck and moved more in the third and Eddie tried to crowd him. Eddie was frustrated that G was moving so much in round four. The Irishman slipped and scored a few times and his head movement after round one was much improved. We went to the cards after four. Hyland didn't agree with the decision. "No, I don't," he said. "He did rock me a bit in the first but the rest of his shots caught me on the gloves."

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