Written by Michael Woods
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The good old days returned for an afternoon, compliments of CBS and Golden Boy. Fight fans who once enjoyed weekly doses of pugilism that didn't force them to sip coffee just to make it to the main event were pleased to see on Saturday afternoon Leo Santa Cruz having the distinct honor of being the headliner in boxing's first foray onto CBS in 15 years. And the California resident didn't disappoint in defending his IBF bantamweight crown against Alberto Guevara (16-0 entering, with six KOs) of Mexico at the LA Sports Arena. Yes, he has looked sharper in prior outings, but he did get his hand raised, via unanimous decision in boxing's return to the networks. Santa Cruz' experience and willpower showed, and graced him with a UD victory, by scores of 116-112, 118-110, 119-109.

He spoke to Jim Gray after, and apologized for not being sharper. He threw 989 punches, for the record, and outlanded the loser, 291-158. Our man Paul Malignaggi saw the fight even, 114-114.

Santa said he was having some trouble breathing, from a nose problem, and did hurt his hand somewhat during the bout.

Santa Cruz, the ultra-busy hitter who is one of the game's busiest high caliber scrappers, brought a 22-0-1 mark into the ring with him. The Mexican-born fighter, in his fifth start of the

year, came out hurling. He last fought 35 days ago, and in the first, wasn't able to solve Guevara right away. He stayed on the outside, kept his feet busy and fired, and jetted. Blood flowed some from the champ's nose and he heard it from his corner after the first.

The 24 year old Santa looked to close the distance, looked to get in G's face, to start the second. He countered more, too. Santa staggered the 22 year old G after taking some body heat early, with a right hand in round three.

The fourth was tight, hard to score. G said after the fifth round, "My head is hurting." In round six, a cut formed on the underdog's right eye. The distance had closed, and it helped Santa. G lost the seventh, and was buzzed a time or two. "You lost the last round," his corner told him. "Keep going to your right," they added. In the eighth, Santa's hook was landing, because the mover wasn't moving as quickly. Santa had looked better in prior fights against less mobile guys but was in control, one could argue, in the ninth. In the tenth, Santa went lefty, then went back to righty. G didn't go overboard to wrest the crown in the 11th. In the 12th, Santa stepped on the gas, upped his game. We went to the cards.

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