

RINGSIDE REPORT from Top Rank/HBO Show in Texas

Written by Kelsey McCarson
Sunday, 10 November 2013 12:47



CORPUS CHRISTI—Mikey Garcia (33-0, 28 KOs) rose to the occasion, after an early knockdown, to score an impressive KO win over tough guy Rocky Martinez (27-2-2, 16 KOs) for the WBO junior lightweight title. The bout took place at the American Bank Center in Corpus Christi, Texas and was broadcast live as the main event of an HBO tripleheader. Garcia wore purple trunks while Martinez came to the ring adorned in the red, white and blue of the Puerto Rican flag.

Picture above courtesy Rachel McCarson, wife of correspondent Kelsey McCarson.

Garcia started coldly efficient. While Martinez employed a jab, cross combination at a distance, Garcia meant to close the distance with shorter punches. The first was largely a feeling out round. The second was more of the same, though the pace picked up a bit by way of Garcia closing the distance between the two competitors. The action was at a lull until Martinez let loose a thunderous right that sent Garcia straight to his rump. Garcia sat in protest a bit after the knockdown. It appeared to ringsiders the fighter either didn't know what happened, or he believed a slip could be caused by a flush right hand. Regardless, he rose to his feet to continue and made it out of the round unscathed.

“That happens in boxing,” said Garcia afterwards. “He caught me with a good right hand.”

Both men's heads were snapped back in Round 3. Martinez landed a stiff one-two, but Garcia backed him up hard after with a powerful jab. When he landed another one a bit later, he seemed fueled by the success of it. Next, Garcia sent that very same hard jab along with a straight left hand behind it. The force of the blows were mighty.

Garcia's gloves were battering rams in Round 4. Martinez did his best to keep away from harm, but Garcia's blows were just too strong. Martinez jabbed his way out of danger at times, but

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could couldn't get out of the way of Garcia's rights and lefts. Martinez is a pro's pro though, so he was able to stay in the fight with hard rights followed with ducking motions to stay in the fight.

Round 5 was similar. Garcia landed the telling blows but Martinez worked hard to stay in contention. Garcia stunned Martinez towards the end of the round. In Round 6, Garcia started landing his left hook. The punch put Martinez off balance and allowed Garcia to open up more penetrating combinations. He stunned Martinez and had him in the corner. Martinez fought out of it but was soon eating even more shots than before. Martinez banged his gloves together in a show of bravery. Garcia responded by banging his own gloves against Martinez's head and torso until the bell sounded. The mercy was but momentary.

Two overhand rights wobbled Martinez in Round 7. He gamely fought on, but Garcia was teeing off now. Ever the precise puncher, Garcia didn't push the issue. He waited patiently for his opportunities to make his opponent pay, then took what was there. Martinez backed Garcia up a bit with a right, but another overhand power shot by Garcia shook Martinez yet again before the round was complete.

Round 8 was the end of things for Martinez. Garcia landed two overhand rights to stun his opponent, then followed it up with a devastating left hook to end it. Martinez made it to his knees but no further. Referee Laurence Cole counted the fallen fighter out at :56 of Round 8. The winning punch was beautifully set up and frightfully delivered by the winner, Garcia.

"He was pretty hurt by that one," said Martinez of the body blow. "I knew it was a good shot."

With a new title belt in tow, Garcia said he was ready to fight whoever Top Rank put in front of him next. When asked specifically about former Cuban amateur star Yuriorkis Gamboa as a possible opponent, Garcia said he was ready and willing to oblige.

"Why not?" said Garcia. "Let's do it."

Donaire Drops Darchinyan Again in Rematch

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In the co-main event, Nonito Donaire (32-2, 21 KOs) defeated Vic Darchinyan (39-6-1, 28 KOs) by TKO in Round 9. The rematch of Donaire's 5-round knockout victory over Darchinyan six years prior turned into a fierce test of wills. This was not the same Vic Darchinyan from back then. This time, the bout was wildly competitive.

Donaire said after the fight he thought Darchinyan broke his cheek early. Speaking to Max Kellerman, Donaire said it helped him decide whether or not he truly wanted to be a fighter.

"Is this it for me?" Donaire asked himself midway through the bout. It wasn't, though Donaire said it was hard for him to be as patient with the proceedings as his corner wanted.

"I wanted to fight," said Donaire. "My corner kept telling me to box, box and be smart...but I wanted to fight."

The two set a measured pace in the first. Each man fought mostly from the outside. Donaire's straight right hand was the main weapon of the set, with Darchinyan working patiently behind a stuttered jab. Darchinyan, a southpaw, did partially land a looping overhand left right before the bell.

Donaire was more aggressive in Round 2. He came out fast with a jab, setting up right hands and left hooks. Darchinyan appeared bothered by the speed of Donaire's punches. Donaire stumbled Darchinyan a bit with a right hand but was soon sent reeling back himself by a powerful counter left. Darchinyan was pleased with his newfound trick, and landed another one before the round ended.

Donaire came out in the third a bit more passive than before. Darchinyan's left hand was finding a home. Darchinyan's confidence seemed to grow with each passing moment.

Darchinyan landed his left hand in the third. Donaire was aptly trying to jab the danger away, but Darchinyan met the move with guts and guile. Darchinyan landed another left, then seemed

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to stun Donaire on the ropes with another one. The two men traded flush shots at the end of the round. Donaire's left hook landed twice, and Darchinyan responded in kind. The two had to be separated as shots continued to be fired after the bell.

Donaire started finding his mark in Round 4. Moving around the ring on his toes, Donaire was able to put Darchinyan where he wanted. Donaire landed a left hook to the body during an early exchange that seemed to catch Darchinyan by surprise. Jabs and crosses were sent to Darchinyan a good bit, but it did not deter the aggressive Armenian. With ten seconds left in the round, Darchinyan landed a hard left that stunned Donaire in the corner. Darchinyan was a raging bull. He let loose a fury of punches until the end of the round.

Round 5 was invigorating for Darchinyan. He was the stalker now. He rose first from his corner in anticipation, and came out the hunter. Donaire circled but Darchinyan stayed on him, patiently aggressive. Hard lefts moved Donaire around the ring, if not landing then just bothering him enough to move his feet to get away from the action. Donaire landed a nice left hook towards the end of the round. Darchinyan responded with aggression but Donaire's blows were the cleaner.

Donaire's counters made their mark in Round 6. Darchinyan was mostly unsuccessful save for a tackle he employed when the two men collided mid-ring. Donaire landed on his back with Darchinyan atop him. Referee Lawrence Cole stood both up, cleaned the men's gloves and the action resumed.

More of the same in Round 7. The men were largely inactive, but each had done enough damage in previous rounds to make opponent wary. If the term "high-speed chess" that's used to sometimes describe fights is something that actually exists, this fight was it. Both men were moving fast and thinking faster.

In Round 8, the measured pace exploded after Donaire landed several telling blows. Darchinyan stumbled and Donaire attacked. It was time for the left hook, which landed flush, hard and with concussive force. Darchinyan went face down, his body slumped over atop the bottom rope. The brave warrior got to his feet but was visibly hurt. He stumbled around the ring a bit, but gave a brave enough face to Referee Cole to continue. Darchinyan was down seconds later after a stumble that was ruled a slip. Donaire then landed a right hand. The two traded sloppy flurries before Darchinyan found himself backed once again into one corner, then another. Darchinyan was hurt badly now. Donaire threw the kitchen sink at him until Cole wisely

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waved the bout off at 2:06 of the Round 9.

Darchinyan wanted to continue but wasn't overly upset about the stoppage. He admitted Donaire caught him with a good punch.

"That's just the way it goes," said Darchinyan, who promised before the bout he'd retire Donaire.

Demetrius Andrade Scores Impressive Win Over Martirosyan

In the first televised bout of the evening, junior middleweight Demetrius Andrade (19-0, 13 KOs) overcame a Round 1 knockdown to defeat Vanes Martirosyan (33-0-1, 21 KOs) by split decision. Judges at ringside scored the bout 114-113, 117-110 and 112-115.

Andrade's ring walk music indicated he'd be the "king of the ring" tonight. It proved to be true. The bout was scheduled for 12 rounds for the vacant WBO light middleweight title. Andrade wore blue trunks trimmed in black. Martirosyan wore red.

Round 1 opened with both men trying to set the pace they wanted. Martirosyan wanted to set traps in order to come forward with aggressive counterpunches. Andrade, a southpaw, preferred staying behind a long and fast jab. Andrade landed a sneaky left hand early, but Martirosyan erased the scoring blow with a counter left hook of his own that sent Andrade down to the floor. Andrade made it up though and kept Martirosyan at bay with movement until the bell sounded.

Andrade reestablished his jab in Round 2. The lanky slickster used it to keep Martirosyan mostly at bay, and followed it up on occasion with his overhand left. Still, Martirosyan got the better of the exchanges the times he made his way under Andrade's jab.

In Round 3, Martirosyan came out with fire. The stalker used short steps to enter into the fray. When there, he let loose hard hooks and quick one-twos. Andrade tried to counter with

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shortening up his jab, but Martirosyan was starting to slip and parry it now with more authority.

Good work from long range did Andrade well in Round 4. His left hand lead was landing but Martirosyan didn't seem bothered by it. It was now all about timing. Martirosyan's mind was working. He wanted to time Andrade's left hand in order to land a fight-ender of his own, but couldn't quite solve the puzzle.

Sweat and spit flew from both men in Round 5. Andrade landed his jabs and crosses. Martirosyan stepped through them at times to land sharper blows of his own. Where that failed, he sent hard hooks to the Andrade's body. Both men upped the ante a bit at the end of the round. Each sent hard shots in succession, but Martirosyan's were straighter and landed more forcefully. At times, it appeared as if Andrade was just flailing wildly at his Armenian opponent.

Martirosyan seemed to tire in Round 6, and Andrade seized on it like a lion. Hard lefts from Andrade cracked Martirosyan's head back like a jack-in-the-box. Once, twice, then three times. Now the speedster was sure of his target, and it showed. Andrade wasn't wild now. He was an accomplished boxer using precision, speed and accuracy. Martirosyan made show of it but Andrade was taking over now, and the stark contrast was punctuated by a looping left hand from Andrade that smacked Martirosyan before the bell rang.

Andrade found new confidence in his jab in Round 7, and his head movement was now giving Martirosyan trouble. Andrade's jab and hooking front hand made it difficult for Martirosyan to set his feet and fire. Still, the tough slugger landed with force on occasion, and he threw his punches with vigor. The pattern played itself over in rounds 8 and 9. Andrade's speed was just too much for the tiring Martirosyan.

Andrade's quality came out in Round 10. He was in control of the action from start to finish. His long jab was a paintbrush, Martirosyan's face was the canvas. Straight lefts and right hooks kept the hard-puncher at a distance, and dips and dives made up for the rest when Martirosyan tried to make the action.

Martirosyan seemed in slow motion in Round 11. Andrade's hands seemed faster than ever. He did just enough to keep Martirosyan at the end of his punches, and shimmied his shoulders at times to show that it was easy for him.

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If Andrade believed he had the fight in the bag, he didn't show in Round 12. He pressed the action using the same tools he used the entire night: jabs, crosses and right hooks. Martirosyan was just too slow to land anything in return when he tried, and Andrade wasn't letting off the gas.

Top Rank Prospects Alex Saucedo and Oscar Valdez Remain Undefeated

Two of Top Rank's best young prospects were on display on Saturday night as part of the untelevised portion of the undercard. Both remain undefeated.

Welterweight prospect Alex Saucedo (11-0, 8 KOs) defeated Steven Hall (6-5, 6 KOs) by TKO in Round 3.

Hall was game, but Saucedo's hands were too fast, too strong and too easily able to find their mark right from the opening bell. Hall's head was snapped back in succession in Round 1 by willful jabs and sharp combinations. The pattern continued throughout the six minute and eleven second fight.

Hall crumbled against the ropes and down to his back at the end of Round 2, but made it back to his feet before the count could reach 10. Saucedo landed another brutal hook shortly thereafter but couldn't follow it up enough to get Hall out before the bell sounded.

Round 3 began with an even more brutal hook from Saucedo. Hall crumbled backwards to the corner from the force of it. Saucedo wisely followed it up with hooks and crosses in rapid-fire succession before the referee halted the bout at 11 seconds of the round.

Featherweight prospect and former Mexican amateur star Oscar Valdez (8-0, 7 KOs) scored a Round 5 knockout over Jesus Lule Raya (6-7, 1 KO). Raya was the type who looked in trouble before he even entered the ring. But he gave it his all when the bell sounded.

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It wasn't enough.

Valdez was patient in Round 1. He stayed out of range, but moved in here and there enough to land punishing left hooks to the body. He augmented the approach with more lateral movement than he probably needed, but he looked crisp and fluid doing it. He was in command.

Round 2 began with more vigor. Raya came forward as if he believed he could win. But Valdez responded with more aggression of his own, much of it sharp jabs. Still, the left hook to the body landed enough times to take the round.

In the third, Valdez stayed in the pocket more. His left hook was now setting up right crosses and lefts to the temple. Raya did his best to keep pace. There was lots of action with neither man relenting.

Round 4 was similar though Raya was content to stay a bit more at a distance this time, possibly in response to catching all those hooks to his torso.

Valdez became the stalker in Round 5. He worked in behind a stiff jab to send hooks downstairs and crosses up the chimney. The end came after Valdez found a home for his overhand right. Then another and another. He landed several of them in succession, the last of which was the knockout punch, a hard left uppercut to the chin.

A count was not needed. Raya was out as 2:48 of the round.

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Bernie Campbell says:

Can you imagine the repercussions with the Asian Campaign that would suffer if Vic didn't go down, that must have hurt! All that step by step methodical work, all that apparent and assumed sweat!