

Lucas Matthyse Out-Slugs John Molina In Potential Fight Of Year; Thurman Wins Too

Written by David A. Avila
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Argentina's Lucas "The Machine" Matthyse and John Molina Jr. engaged in a potential Fight of the Year and Keith Thurman shortcircuited Julio Diaz in knockout ending fights on Saturday at the StubHub Center.

Seems every time a fight card takes place in the Carson stadium it stirs riveting results. This time the co-main event stole the show with Matthyse (35-3, 33 Kos) surviving two knockdowns to score a pair of knockdowns himself in winning a blazing fight against Southern California's Molina (27-4, 22 Kos).

Molina erupted early against the heavy-handed Argentine with his own thunder in the first round. An overhand right connected and sent Matthyse hurling across the ring. It proved that it was not going to be one-sided due to Molina rising up from the lightweight division to the junior welterweights.

Another overhand right sent Matthyse to the mat in round two. If he thought the first big blow was an aberration, the second one showed Molina packed power too in his rangy body.

Matthyse re-gained his footing in the third round with a stiff and accurate jab and some well-placed combinations. It looked like he was going to turn things around but an accidental clash of heads opened a cut on the Argentine. A worrisome look crossed his face at the end of the round.

The Argentine slugger resumed his mixture of jabs and combinations to the body and head and was clearly winning the round. Toward the last 40 seconds Molina connected once more with a right and Matthyse was sent to his knees once again. When the fight resumed he scrambled to evade any more blows from the hard charging Molina.

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Matthyse resumed his boxing and was again winning when he was caught with yet another overhand right. It was one of those rounds where one boxer was winning the majority of the round but was hurt more by one punch.

Slowly the fight was turning in Matthyse's favor as he began connecting with combinations. A short winged combination aided by a push sent Molina down to the floor. Referee Pat Russell mistakenly ruled it a knockdown but could not see the push. No matter, Molina did not complain.

By the 10th round it was clear that the blows to the body and head of Molina were sapping his energy. Though he was fighting back, his punches were wider and not landing as in earlier rounds. An eight-punch barrage sent Molina slumped to the ground for the first legitimate knockdown for Matthyse. Molina looked very weak as he got up and walked to his corner. The ringside physician examined the Molina fighter and allowed the fight to continue. Molina looked spent.

Matthyse shot out across the ring and fired a right hand. Molina evaded the big blows by a four-punch combination sent Molina crumbling in the corner once again and the fight was waved off 22 seconds into the 11th round.

"He's a very strong fighter," said Matthyse who knew Molina was moving up in weight. "I was worried but I came back."

Molina, whose last fight was a come-from-behind knockout win in the last round against Mickey Bey Jr., had told anyone that asked that he wanted this fight and was not worried about Matthyse's power.

"I was just happy we could give the fans a good fight," said Molina. "I think I was the only one to hurt him like that...he's the real deal. He can punch."

Another who can punch is Florida's Thurman who caught former lightweight world champion

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Diaz with a right to the ribs in the thirdround to end the fight.

"I felt the body shot land, I felt he was going to go down," saidThurman.

Up to that point, but fighters were exchanging and still on test mode.But Thurman floored Diaz in round two with a left hook to the head andafter a few seconds, Diaz took a knee.

"I landed a left hook to the temple," said the undefeatedwelterweight about the knockdown that saw Diaz take a knee. "It was a wise decision."

Diaz said that he temporarily blacked out and needed the time to regroup. He resumed the fight and leaped to counter-attack mode when the round ended. Then came the blow to the body in round three and it was over as Diaz's trainer and brother Joel Diaz ended the fight.

"I got caught with a good body shot to the ribs," said Julio Diaz. "I've never given up in a fight."

It was a wise move as Diaz confessed it was hard to breathe and there were eight more rounds to go. He gave Thurman a good grade for his performance.

"You got to give space to these young cats," he said.

OTHER BOUTS

Omar "Panterita" Figueroa (23-0-1, 17 Kos) remained undefeated with a split-decision win over fellow Texan Jerry Belmontes (19-4) and retained the WBC lightweight title. It was a close fight that saw two judges prefer the busier punching Figueroa to Belmontes running and sniping style. There were no knockdowns in the fight that began well in the first six rounds, but became a footrace in the second half to the dismay of the fans.

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"He was just running," said Figueroa.

Middleweight Jermall Charlo (18-0, 14 Kos) stopped Hector Munoz(22-13-1) in the fourth round.

Sharif Bogere (24-1, 16 Kos) returned after a long layoff to win byknockout over Arturo Urena (20-17-1) in the sixth round of alightweight match.

Frankie Gomez (17-0, 13 Kos) stopped Orlando Vazquez (12-4-1 in thesecond round of a welterweight fight.

JoJo Diaz (10-0, 7 Kos) defeated veteran Luis Maldonado (36-13-1) byunanimous decision in a junior featherweight bout.

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