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INDIO-Despite several cuts caused by head butts Sacramento's Vicente Escobedo toughed out a bloody 10-round lightweight struggle against Colombia's Walter Estrada (38-14-1, 25 KOs) to win by unanimous decision on Friday.

It was Escobedo's first fight since losing to Northern California rival Robert "The Ghost" Guerrero last November, but he didn't find it easy despite fighting in front of 1,440 fans at Fantasy Springs Casino.

"He was an awkward and clever boxer," said Escobedo (23-3, 14 KOs).

A triple combination in the first round nearly dropped Estrada, whose knees bent from a riveting right to the body.

Lead right hands kept landing for Escobedo so he dried out the well in the second round with a slew of right cross leads. Another triple combination landed for the Indio boxer.

Estrada began getting friskier after the third round. Some right hooks and straight lefts connected but Escobedo's combinations and body punches continued to score points. Every so often that right lead would connect through Estrada's gloves. That was a precursor to later in the fight.

Finally, in the seventh, a right dropped Estrada on his pants. The Colombian beat the count and was nearly dropped again with another right and held on as much as possible for the remainder of the round.

"I thought I was going to take him out after I knocked him down twice, but he was smart," Escobedo said.

A clash of heads in the eighth round opened up a bad gash along side Escobedo's right eye. Blood poured into his eye and seemed to bother the Indio boxer. Estrada had his best round as he continued pouring on punches as Escobedo retreated.

"Lefthanders are always hard to fight," said Joel Diaz, who trains Escobedo in Indio. "This guy was a crafty veteran."

In the final two rounds Escobedo stayed in front and pounded it out against Estrada. Both felt the fight was too close to take a chance on safety and exchanged freely. After 10 rounds two judges scored it 97-92 twice and one judge 96-93, for Escobedo.

"It was tough," said Escobedo who endured two cuts around the right eye and left side of his forehead from butts. "I've been suspended for 60 days due to the cuts. I was ready to train tomorrow."

Rolando Arellano, current manager of Victor Ortiz, is now managing Escobedo and said they took another fight against a southpaw to satisfy the television network and get the Indio-based fighter back on the world title track at 130-pounds.

Caballero

Crowds arrived early to see Coachella's Randy Caballero (8-0, 4 KOs) fight Palm Springs fighter Hugo Ramos (3-8-2) in a battle of local desert boxers. Both knew each other and had sparred many times, but this time it was for real. Caballero won by unanimous decision by using his superior speed and boxing skills to outmaneuver and out-score hard swinging Ramos in a six round junior featherweight match. All three judges scored it 60-54 for Caballero.

"There are no friends once we get in the ring," said Caballero who sparred many times with Ramos. "I knew he could take a punch and he was going to come forward."

Though Caballero won every round Ramos waited for his moments to land the big blow. He did manage to land a few bombs but not enough to slow down Caballero's race to the end with quick combinations and pinpoint right crosses. Most of the crowd got its money's worth.

"The tougher the guys the better. We want to get going," said Caballero, who will fight anywhere between bantamweight and junior featherweight. "I'm ready to take them out."

Other bouts

Las Vegas boxer Sharif Bogere (19-0, 12 KOs) blitzed Brooklyn's Shamir Reyes (18-9-2) and knocked him down twice before referee Jerry Cantu stopped the fight at 2:37 of the first round of the lightweight bout.

A missed knocked down cost San Bernardino's Juan Sandoval (2-6-1) the win over Indio's Diego Madrigal (1-0-1). Instead, the four round featherweight bout was scored a draw 38-38. Sandoval landed two big right hands to drop Madrigal in the third round but referee Tony Crebs ruled it a slip. From there on Madrigal ran around the ring for the remainder of the fight. Sandoval won the crowd's favor but gained only an impasse. In a prior fight Sandoval knocked out Puerto Rican amateur star Robert Figueroa.

Alabama's Michael Finney (7-0, 7 KOs) scored his seventh knockout in seven fights when he stopped Joshua Beeman (4-9-2) at 1:12 of the fifth round of a welterweight fight.

Canada's Mikael Zewski (8-0) scored a third round technical knockout over Mexico City's Gerardo Prieto (6-11-1) in a middleweight contest. The fight was stopped at the end of the third round. Prieto was never knocked down.

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