Written by David A. Avila
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Las Vega's best native prizefighter Melinda "La Maravilla" Cooper returns after a lengthy absence in the ring to fight IBF super bantamweight titleholder Ada Velez in a rematch.

"I'm super excited about fighting in Vegas!" says Cooper who still lives and works in the casino capital.

Raised most of her life among the glitz and fast-pace of boxing's new Mecca, the extremely talented and beautiful prizefighter Cooper (21-1, 11 KOs) fights Velez (19-3-3, 6 KOs) on Sunday, Nov. 20 at the Texas Station Gambling House and Hotel. It's one of two female world title bouts staged by Sampson Boxing.

Last March, in Costa Rica, Cooper and Velez fought for the then vacant IBF super bantamweight title inside the massive soccer stadium in San Jose, the capital of the country. After 10 seemingly one-side rounds in Cooper's favor, two judges shockingly gave Velez the split-decision win.

Many fans in the stadium were dumbfounded by the decision. Cooper was stunned. In that fight the Las Vegas speedster hurt Velez in round four and forced the Puerto Rican veteran to retreat rapidly in defense. It was as one-sided as Manny Pacquiao's win over Shane Mosley.

"What I remember most is that Ada ran a lot," says Cooper, who is a former flyweight world

champion now fighting at super bantamweight.

Not that Velez is untalented, she is a very skilled boxer whose experience can befuddle most opponents. But that night she was in full retreat and because of extremely suspect judging was given the win.

Efforts to obtain a rematch finally bloomed and now Cooper and Velez will clash once again but this time in Las Vegas. It's been nearly five years since the petite brunette bomber fought in her hometown.

Before 2007, Cooper had fought a dozen times including her dazzling professional debut at the record-setting age of 17 years old. It was a decision forced upon her because of the fear she instilled in the amateur ranks. No other girls would face her in the ring despite all of the protective devices like head gear, larger gloves and scoring system.

"They were afraid of her," says James Pena, who's trained Cooper since she first walked into a boxing gym as an 11-year-old in Las Vegas. "So she turned pro."

Boxing fans in the Las Vegas area had become accustomed to attending her fights which regularly sold out. Perhaps her most riveting fight came against Jeri Sitzes, a tall, hard-hitting prizefighter who traded blows with Cooper until the final bell. That fight held the crowd spellbound.

"Not much has really changed in my life since I last fought in Vegas. I am older now and have had a few more fights since," says Cooper, 26, who now sports a short hairstyle.

Las Vegas is waiting to see the hometown girl finally return to her element.

"I love fighting in my hometown," says Cooper.

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Radam G says:

Nice! I expect for the Cooper to drive all over the titleholder and take that belt away. Holla!