

Mexico's Andy Ruiz KO's Elijah McCall in Vegas Heavyweight Prospect Battle

Written by David A. Avila

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TOP RANK



LAS VEGAS-Mexican heavyweight Andy Ruiz broke through the barriers of doubt with a convincing performance in beating Elijah McCall by technical knockout on Friday night.

In a battle between heavyweights prospects Mexicali's Ruiz (17-0, 11 Kos) battered McCall (11-2-1, 10 Kos), the son of former heavyweight champion Oliver McCall before a stunned audience who expected a close combative fight at the Texas Station Casino. It was one-sided.

Ruiz established his jab and superior hand-speed that caught McCall repeatedly in the opening round. And when McCall tried to retaliate, he was met with precise counter left hooks and three-punch combinations.

"The plan was to use the jab and going in really strong," said Ruiz, who may not win any body building contests but possesses extraordinary hand speed. "I wanted to be careful because I know he's a big puncher."

Midway through the first round it was clear that Ruiz could counter McCall's shots and proved adept at landing combinations.

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"I wasn't trying to get wild. I was just picking my shots," said Ruiz, who is promoted by Top Rank.

The second round saw Ruiz more confident that he could open up behind the jab and body punches. McCall was not ready to give in and launched a one-two combination that connected but was met with a more powerful three-punch combo that forced the Chicago-based McCall to back away. A one-two wobbled McCall, who seemed stunned at the bell.

Ruiz immediately attacked the body in round three and fired a four-punch combination. McCall tried to fight back but was met with some brutal left hooks and right hands. Near the end of the round, with 10 seconds remaining in the round Ruiz began to unload. Referee Kenny Bayless wisely stopped the fight at 2:59 of the round.

"It was a good stoppage," said Ruiz. "He was going to get seriously hurt."

After the fight Oliver McCall congratulated Ruiz for his win and asked for a match.

Ruiz's manager Joseph Gagliardi said that the fight was an important step in establishing his fighter's improvement.

"Andy's progressed very well. I know he's got a number of knockouts but people have questioned his conditioning," said Gagliardi. "I've been in this business for about 40 years and he has one of the strongest punches in his jab that I've ever seen."

Gagliardi said another undefeated heavyweight prospect would be sought for Ruiz to fight. "I needed to see for myself Andy fight an experienced heavyweight like McCall," said Gagliardi. "I see that he's improved and ready for another similar fight."

Other bouts

A welterweight fight between Nigeria's Wale "Lucky Boy" Omotoso (23-0, 19 Kos) and Puerto Rico's Irving Garcia (17-8-3, 8 Kos) was stopped at the end of round two. An accidental clash opened a bad cut and stunned Garcia who had scored a knockdown against Omotoso. The Puerto Rican fighter was unable to continue so that fight was ruled a no contest according to Nevada State Athletic Commission rules.

Chicago's Trevor McCumby (9-0, 8 Kos) kept his winning streak going but the knockout streak was snapped by West Virginia's Eric Watkins after six rounds of a light heavyweight fight. McCumby caught Watkins plenty of times with counter shots but the fight got tougher each round instead of easier. The scores were 59-55 twice and 60-54 for McCumby.

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A battle between southpaw welterweights was won by New York's Kenny Abril (14-5-1, 7 Kos) by split-decision against Filipino Dennis Laurente (40-4-4, 22 Kos) after eight rounds. Abril won the fight in the last round when he landed a solid four-punch combination to get the nod on judge Bob Bennett's card. That was the difference in the decision. Judge Al Lefkowitz had 77-74 for Laurente and judge Tim Cheatham 77-74 for Abril. "I really want to beat Manny Pacquiao," said an ecstatic Abril. Laurente is managed by Pacquiao.

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