

The Past Week in Action 1 March 2021

Highlights:

- Saul Alvarez savages Avni Yildirim in three rounds to retain WBC and WBA super middle titles**
- McWilliams Arroyo halts substitute Abraham Rodriguez to win interim WBC flyweight title**
- Rene Mark Cuarto outpoints champion Pedro Taturan to win the IBF Minimumweight title in an all-Filipino clash**
- Joseph Parker takes unanimous decision over Junior Fa**
- Anthony Dirrell and Kyrone Davis fight to a draw**
- Heavyweight Jerry Forrest climbs off the canvas three times to get a draw against unbeaten Zhilei Zhang**

World Title/Major Shows

27 February

Miami, FL, USA: Super Middle: Saul Alvarez (55-1-2) W RTD 3 Avni Yildirim (21-3). Fly: McWilliams Arroyo (21-4) W TKO 5 Abraham Rodriguez (27-3). Heavy: Zhilei Zhang (22-0-1) DREW 10 Jerry) Forrest (26-4-1). Super Middle: Diego Pacheco (11-0) W PTS 8 Rodolfo Gomez (14-5-1). Light: Keyshawn Davis (1-0) W TKO 2 Lester Brown (4-3-3).

Alvarez vs. Yildirim

Alvarez gets the job done as he floors Yildirim and after three one-sided forces Yildirim to retire.

Round 1

Alvarez was immediately on the mark with his left hooks to the body. He was warned for a low punch but was soon digging in more left hooks as well as rights to the body. Yildirim was hiding behind a high guard and only probing with his jab.

Score: 10-9 Alvarez

Round 2

Alvarez rocked Yildirim at the start of the round with a right uppercut. Yildirim was still behind a high guard but Alvarez was hooking around his guard with lefts to the body. Yildirim kept rolling forward but Alvarez was picking his spots and finding the target with hooks and uppercuts. Yildirim was more adventurous trying some left hooks and right of his own

Score: 10-9 Alvarez

Alvarez 20-18

Round 3

Again Yildirim was trundling forward but being caught with counters. He had a little success with hooks inside but was then sent crashing to the floor by a right cross. Yildirim was up quickly but took a solid beating for the rest of the round as Alvarez landed clubbing punches to head and body.

Score: 10-8 Alvarez

Alvarez 30-26

In the interval there was no sign at first that Yildirim was pulling out. His corner was giving him advice, administering water and greasing-up his face and then suddenly it all stopped and they called the referee over and said their man was retiring, Alvarez retains the WBA and WBC titles and moves on to a unification match with WBO champion Billy Joe Saunders on May 8. As expected Yildirim was in way over his head and showed nothing before being pulled out. Another sanctioning body "gift" to boxing in the shape of a fight that should never have happened as Yildirim had never beaten a rated fighter.

Arroyo vs. Rodriguez

Arroyo wins the interim WBC title with stoppage of very short notice substitute Rodriguez. Arroyo opened well behind a strong jab with Rodriguez on the back foot looking to leap in with his punches but swinging wildly. Arroyo began to find the target in the second connecting with left hooks to the body and overhand rights with Rodriguez sloppy with his attempts to attack. The third was all Arroyo as he was digging in his hooks and chasing down Rodriguez who just kept circling the perimeter of the ring but doing little else. Arroyo managed to trap Rodriguez against the ropes in the fourth and a series of

hooks and uppercuts saw Rodriguez drop to one knee. He made it to his feet and although under heavy fire he survived to the bell. Arroyo continued to score heavily in the fifth and with nothing coming back from Rodriguez the doctor climbed onto the ring apron waiving for the fight to be stopped. Arroyo was to have challenged Julio Cesar Martinez for the WBC title but Martinez injured his hand after weighing in. Arroyo, whose brother McJoe is a former IBF super flyweight champion, had lost in previous shots at the WBC and IBF titles. Rodriguez had been knocked out in two rounds by Angel Acosta in a challenge for the WBO light flyweight title and was 106lbs for his last fight so was on a loser from the start and showed little.

Zhang vs. Forrest

Forrest gets off the canvas three times in the first three rounds to fight his way to a majority draw against unbeaten Zhang. In this clash of southpaws Forrest made a confident start in the opener catching the slow Zhang with rights to the head but with less than ten seconds remaining in the round a short left hook deposited him on his rump. He was up quickly and did not look too shaken and the bell went before there could be any further action. Forrest was giving away lots of height and reach to the 6'6" Chinese fighter but was more mobile and had quicker hands. Zhang had the power and after twice shaking Forrest with lefts in the second he landed a right hook to the temple which saw Forrest tumble to the canvas on his back. Forrest was up quickly and was willing to mix it with Zhang to the bell. It looked all over for Forrest as a two rights to the head from Zhang just ten seconds into the third round turned his legs to rubber and sent him falling forwards to the canvas. Forrest was able to continue after the count and they both landed some heavy shots. Having survived three knockdowns and being six points behind after just three rounds Forrest had to work hard to get into the fight. He was able to use his slightly better mobility and quicker hands to claw back the lost points and a clash of heads opened a vertical cut over the right

eye of Zhang. By the eighth both fighters were so exhausted that it was a question of who would collapse first. Neither did but Zhang was deducted a point in the ninth for leaning all over Forrest which helped cancel out the Chinese fighter's early advantage. Scores 93-93 twice and 95-93 for Forrest. Losses to Jermaine Franklin and Carlos Takam had stymied Forrest's progress but with Zhang rated a very flattering No 8 by the WBO it looks a good result on paper for Forrest. Zhang's flaws have been known and this fight just illustrated them again. He is big and dangerous but about as agile as a three-legged hippo. At 37 he has gone as far as he is going-barring a lucky punch.

Pacheco vs. Gomez

Pacheco goes eight rounds for the first time to outpoint Gomez in a gruelling contest. Pacheco used a sharp jab to put Gomez on the back foot in a feeling-out first. Gomez just could not get on the front foot and Pacheco was starting to find the target with rights in the second. Gomez was more positive in the third and they traded hard shots. Pacheco settled behind his jab in the fourth and rattled Gomez with a crisp left hook before shaking him badly with two rights in the fifth. Pacheco outboxed Gomez in the sixth and seventh and two tired boxers slugged their way through the eighth. Scores 79-73 for Pacheco on all three cards. Good learning fight for the 6'4" 19-year-old prospect. Fifth loss for Gomez but all on points.

Davis vs. Brown

Another top notch amateur star moves over to the pros as Davis has too much of everything for Brown. Although supposedly a southpaw Davis was quickly into his stride from an orthodox guard ramming home rights to the body and by the end of the first Brown was covering up under fire. Davis began putting his punches together in the second and floored Brown with a right to the head. Brown beat the count but Davis was unloading on him on the ropes when the referee came in to save Brown. The 22-year-old "southpaw" Davis won gold

medals at the US Elite National Championships in 2017 and 2018, was National Police Athletic League champion in 2013 and 2014, National Golden Gloves winner in 2017 a silver medals in 2019 at the World Championship and the Pan American Games in and won the 2020 US Olympic Team Trials so has great credentials. Bahamian Brown is now 3-2 in his last 5 fights.

General Santos City, Philippines: Minimum: Rene Cuarto (19-2-2) W PTS 12 Pedro Taduran (14-3-1).

Cuarto vs. Taduran

Cuarto wins the IBF minimumweight title with unanimous decision over champion Taduran in an all-Filipino clash which sees Cuarto build a good lead and then just survive a strong finish from Taduran in a fast-paced contest. At its most basic level it was Pedro the puncher against Rene Mark the mover. Cuarto surrender the centre of the ring to Taduran. Cuarto was circling the perimeter of the then darting in to score with a quick burst of punches and dipping out before Taduran could counter. Cuarto's excellent footwork left Taduran struggling to cut off the ring. Taduran was working with left hooks to the body when he got the chance but too often was being speared by jabs from Cuarto and clipped by quick left uppercuts. The third was a big round for Taduran. He was rocked early by a right but then did a much better job of cutting down the ring and was able to pound Cuarto with body punches. Taduran continued to press hard over the next three rounds but Cuarto was getting his punches off first landing left hooks and uppercuts and slipping and sliding away from the champion's attacks. Taduran had a good seventh. Cuarto looked to be slowing and was taking punishment to the body a right to the head saw him dip at the knees and almost go down. Taduran was coming on stringer with each round and he shook Cuarto with heavy shots in the eighth and ninth. Taduran also had the better of the action in the tenth. A tiring Cuarto twice slipped to

the floor and then pitched forward into Taturan sending them both down heavily. Cuarto needed a round and he had a good eleventh up on his toes with lots of movement and scoring and diving out of the way of Taturan's attacks. Taturan attacked hard in the last. At one point a retreating Cuarto when avoiding Taturan's punches went half way through the ropes sitting on the middle one and then pitched onto the canvas on his hands and knees. It could have counted as a knockdown but he had been avoiding a punch and not put there by a punch so no count-which was critical. Taturan kept chasing down Cuarto who got a needed breather when the tape on his glove came loose and had to be redone. Taturan won the round but not the fight. Scores 115-113 for Cuarto from all three judges. For me Taturan deserved at least a draw but Cuarto is the new title holder and Taturan is an ex-champion.

Auckland, New Zealand: Heavy: Joseph Parker (28-2) W PTS 12 Junior Fa (19-1). Cruiser: Panuve Helu (13-2-1, 1 ND) W PTS 6 Nikolas Charalampous (19-4). Heavy: Hemi Ahio (17-0) W KO 7 Julius Long (18-25-1,1ND). Cruiser: David Nyika (1-0) W KO 1 Jesse Maio (3-1). Light Heavy: Jerome Pampellone (3-0) W KO 1 Antz Amouta (0-1)
Parker vs. Fa

Parker takes unanimous decision over Fa in a disappointing scrappy contest. In the first Parker was coming in behind his jab and scoring to the body but Fa then landed a hard right that stung Parker and did enough to edge the round. In the second and third scoring heavily when he had Fa against the ropes. Parker continued to take the fight to Fa in the fourth and what little clean work was being done was being done by Parker with Fa holding every time Parker got inside. Fa was sharper in the fifth using his longer reach to keep his jab in Parker's face and connecting with a solid right to the chin. Fa took the sixth. He was more positive with his jab and mixing in some rights but the fight was being spoiled by the continual

clinging by Fa. Parker had a good seventh connecting with his jab, some rights and a swinging left before being dragged into clinch after clinch by Fa. Parker also outscored Fa in the eighth with piercing jabs and punching to the body with Fa only looking to hold. A flying elbow from Parker opened a cut over Fa's left eye in the ninth and Parker took the round with some sharp jabs and clubbing rights. The cut was still dripping blood at the start of the tenth and Fa's face was soon smeared all over with blood but luckily the blood was trickling down the side of his face and not into his eye. Despite the injury Fa did what clean scoring there was. Parker took the eleventh he was connecting with his jab and working to the body with Fa just looking to hold and doing very little work. Fa seemed to have just a little bit more left than Parker as they wrestled their way to the final bell. Scores 119-109, 117-111 and 115-113 all for Parker. The first score looked too harsh on Fa and the last too generous with Parker a deserving winner in a contest without highlights with too little clean work and too much clinching. Parker wins the WBO Orient belt and is 3-2 up in fights with Fa as they were 2-2- as amateurs. Parker was No 3 with the WBO and Fa No 5 so the former WBO champion will now almost certainly go on to fight Dereck Chisora in an eliminator. Fa did too much holding and too little punching. He can come again but is unlikely to threaten Joshua, Fury or Wilder.

Charalampous vs. Helu

Helu pulls off a surprise as he outpoints more experienced Charalampous. Little Tongan Helu rocked Charalampous in the opener and Charalampous had to hold to survive. The fight became untidy with Helu throwing less but dangerous and Charalampous never quite able to subdue the Tongan and it did not help that he lost a point for a low punch. Helu faded over the last two rounds in what was a hard fight to score but did enough to win the decision. Scores 58-56 and 57-56 for Helu and 57-56 for Charalampous the third 57-57. Going into this one Helu was 10-1 in his 11 most recent fights.

Ahio vs. Long

Local fighter Ahio climbs off the canvas to kayo Long. Ahio at 6'0" was 13 inches shorter than the 7'1" Long and 97lbs lighter. He was frustrated early by his inability to reach high enough to do any real damage to the Michigan giant. Long's "tactics" were just to lean on the ropes or in a corner and let Ahio do what he pleased then push Ahio back and wait for Ahio to come back and do the same again. Ahio was so busy beating on the corpulent body of Long that he forgot to defend himself and he was put down by a right. The referee sent Long across the ring to the other corner which was the furthest that Long trod in the fight. Ahio was up quickly and went back to work. The tape from the wrapping of both boxers gloves came loose in the fifth and Ahio's was loose again in the sixth (There are solutions to this guys). In the seventh Ahio was connecting with left hooks until an exhausted Long pushed him away and then fell to the canvas on his back and was counted out. Ahio, 30, had outpointed Long in 2019. Based in New Zealand since 2013 Long, 43, is 0-5-1 in his last six outings.

Nyika vs. Maio

Brief first pro fight for Nyika one of the most promising young New Zealand fighters to come out of the amateur ranks in recent years. A right to the head put Maio down and he was counted out after just 29 seconds although complaining with some justification that the finishing punch landed on the back of his head. The 25-year-old 6'6" Nyika won gold medals at both the 2014 and 2018 Commonwealth Games and will make a big impact as a pro. Maio out of his class, outweighed and too small.

Pampellone vs. Amouta

Another of New Zealand's former top amateurs gets a quick win as Pampellone knocks out Amouta in the first round. The 24-year-old London-born Pampellone was New Zealand amateur champion in 2018, 2019 and 2020 and a quarter-

finalist at the 2019 World Amateur Championships. One to follow. Poor Amouta out of his depth.

Los Angeles, CA, USA: Super Middle: Anthony Dirrell (33-2-2) DREW 12 Kyrone Davis (15-2-1). Super Light: Michael Rivera (20-0) W KO 8 Anthony Mercado (13-5). Welter: Jesus Ramos (15-0) W KO 2 Jesus Bojorquez (24-3).

Dirrell vs. Davis

Dirrell and Davis fight to a split draw over twelve forgettable rounds. Dirrell was livelier at the outset but neither fighter really threw much. A couple of punches were enough to give Dirrell the first two rounds with Davis not letting his hands go. Dirrell also took a more competitive third with Davis coming awake late in the round. Davis finally got into the fight from the fourth and he picked up his pace over the fifth and sixth to rebound from his slow start but the activity level remained low. Davis looked to have moved ahead over the seventh and eighth but then faded. Dirrell's greater experience came into play and he staged the stronger finish but so many rounds were close it really was a difficult to score and that was reflected on the cards. Scores 115-113 for Dirrell, 115-113 for Davis and 114-114. First outing for Dirrell since being stopped in nine rounds by David Benavidez in September 2019 in a fight that cost him his WBC super middle title. At 36 the most Dirrell can hope for is one more big payday but he will have to wait to see what the division looks like at the end of the year after Saul Alvarez's efforts to unify the four titles. Creditable performance by Davis whose last two fights were over four and six rounds against very modest opposition.

Rivera vs. Mercado

Rivera too quick, slick and powerful for Mercado. A short hook inside in the second knocked Mercado off balance and he touched the canvas with both gloves. He recovered but then needed more recovery time after a low punch from Rivera in

the third. Rivera handed out steady punishment over the fourth and fifth with Mercado stating to wilt. He went down on one knee under a fierce attack in the sixth but beat the count and then absorbed a savage left hook to the head. Rivera tried hard to end it in the seventh but Mercado made it through the round. Rivera was battering Mercado around the ring in the eighth and after Mercado slumped to the canvas in a corner the referee stopped the fight with just 34 seconds remaining. Dominican Rivera already has useful wins over Fidel Maldonado and Ladarius Miller and is developing well. Puerto Rican Mercado just lacked the power to match Rivera and suffers loss No 3 by KO/TKO.

Ramos vs. Bojorquez

Another impressive performance for teenage southpaw Ramos. He found the target repeatedly in the first over a slower Bojorquez. In the second a fast right hook put Bojorquez down heavily. Bojorquez made it to his feet at eight but Ramos took him to the ropes and connected with lefts and right and with Bojorquez not fighting back the referee stopped the contest. Fourteen inside the distance wins for the 19-year-old from Arizona. Bojorquez was out of the ring for seven years before returning in 2019 and had scored four wins since then.

26 February

Milan, Italy: Super Middle: Daniele Scardina (19-0) W TKO 8 Cesar Nunez (17-3-1). Welter: Maxim Prodan (19-0-1) W TKO 10 Nicola Cristofori (11-3-2). Welter: Nicholas Esposito (14-0) W PTS 10 Tobia Giuseppe Loriga (32-9-3). Super Welter: Mirko Natalizi (10-0) W TKO 4 Islam Teffahi (22-9-2).

Scardina vs. Nunez

Scardina overcomes early struggles to stop Nunez and win the vacant European Union title. As expected Spaniard Nunez took the fight to Scardina rumbling forward throwing hooks from all

angles. Initially Scardina stood his ground and traded punches which suited Nunez. A left hook shook Scardina in the fourth but later in the round he began to get the better of the exchanges. Scardina was rocked by a right cross in the sixth but Nunez was fading badly. In the eighth a right uppercut had Nunez hurt and when he went down under a series of punches the referee stopped the fight. The Miami-based Scardina has 15 victories by KO/TKO but some of his flaws showed here as he struggled early. Being over-ambitious has seen Nunez stopped by Vincent Feigenbutz and Edgar Berlanga so now 3 inside the distance losses in his last 4 fights.

Prodan vs. Cristofori

Prodan gets late stoppage but plenty of questions over the ending. Prodan made a strong start connecting with strong hooks in the first. Southpaw Cristofori settled down in the second and was finding the target with jabs and rights and using clever movement to frustrate Prodan's attacks. Prodan kept coming and floored Cristofori heavily with a left hook in the fifth. Cristofori recovered and was boxing with real skill and outboxing a crude Prodan all the way. Going into the tenth Cristofori looked to have built a winning lead. A left from Prodan forced Cristofori to the ropes. For some reason Cristofori turned towards the referee seemingly indicating towards the canvas as if his gumshield had been dislodged and Prodan quite rightly continued and landed two more heavy blows and the referee stopped the fight. In fact Cristofori had not lost his gumshield so it could have been that he thought he had seen Prodan lose his but he should never have let himself be distracted. Additionally the stoppage looked premature. Ukrainian-born Prodan retains the IBF International title. Former Italian champion Cristofori looked unlucky.

Loriga vs. Esposito

Esposito wins the Italian title with unanimous decision over veteran champion Loriga in a hard fought, thrilling contest. Over the opening two rounds Esposito found it difficult to sort

out a response to Loriga's unorthodox style. Esposito gradually came up with a solution and began to work inside connecting with hooks and uppercuts. Loriga kept finding gaps for counters and was competitive all the way as evidenced by the cut by Esposito's right eye and swollen left cheek. The pressure from the young challenger slowly wore Loriga down and after a frantic ninth Esposito boxed his way to victory. Scores 97-93 for Esposito by all three judges. The 26-year-old "Good Boy" performed well in his first ten round match. Loriga at 43 is still a force and able to give anyone a good fight.

Natalizi vs. Teffahi

Natalizi gets another inside the distance win but not an impressive showing. Tunisian southpaw Teffahi is no puncher but he is experienced and crafty. Natalizi pressed hard but looked crude and unbalanced at times and took more punches than he should. His power saw him through as he overwhelmed Teffahi in the fourth staggering him with a right and then putting him down with another one with the fight being stopped. Fourth consecutive early finish for the "Terminator" from Rome but a long way from his best form. Seven losses by KO/TKO for 38-year-old Teffahi

Talpa de Allende, Mexico: Super Fly: Francisco Rodriguez Jr (34-4-1) W PTS 10 Martin Tecuapetla (15-13-4,1ND).

Rodriguez takes a majority verdict after ten gruelling all-action rounds. Tecuapetla was busier at the start putting Rodriguez on the back foot and outworking him in the first round. In the second Rodriguez was connecting with left hooks and uppercuts to the body but with Tecuapetla firing back in the third. From the fourth the heavier punching from Rodriguez put him in front. Tecuapetla kept marching forward but Rodriguez constantly switched guards and continued to drive body punches through Tecuapetla's guard. Tecuapetla walked through the punishment scoring with hooks and uppercuts of his own and forcing Rodriguez to fight hard to the last bell in an

exciting scrap. Rodriguez looked a good winner but the judges came up with a majority decision with scores of 97-93 and 97-95 for Rodriguez and 98-95 for Tecuapetia. Very tough test for the former WBO and IBF minimumweight champion who gets his fifteenth consecutive win. He is well placed in the flyweight division being rated WBO 2/WBA 4/IBF 5(3) so has a good chance of a title shot this year. Former IBF light fly title challenger Tecuapetla has won only 2 of his last 11 fights but against strong opposition including four past/present world champions.

Hurlingham, Argentina: Light: Juan De Leon (13-3) W KO 6 Jose Acevedo (13-1-1). Light Heavy: Hernan Perez (7-3) W TKO 8 Walter Sequeira (23-8).

De Leon vs. Acevedo

Mild surprise as De Leon scores sixth round kayo over champion Acevedo to win the Argentinian title. Acevedo lead over four forgettable rounds but De Leon then took over. He connected with a series of body punches in the sixth and then a right to the head had Acevedo holding on to De Leon as he slid to the canvas and was counted out. "El Titan" De Leon, the Argentinian No 5 makes in nine victories in a row and gets his fourth inside the distance victory. Acevedo was making the third defence of the title.

Perez vs. Sequeira

Perez comes off the floor to stop Sequeira. With his greater experience Sequeira dominated early in this one. He put Perez down in the fourth and looked on his way to victory but then suffered a fierce attack of cramp that cut his mobility. Perez took over and in the eighth he had Sequeira trapped on the ropes and was unloading with heavy punches. Sequeira tried to respond but had no mobility and dropped to the floor. The referee started the count and Sequeira tried to rise but clearly in pain dropped again and the referee stopped the fight.

Perez wins the vacant South American title with his third inside the distance finish. Fifth inside the distance loss for Sequeira.

Cancun, Mexico: Feather: Sakaria Lukas (24-1) W TKO 2 Mario Macias (28-23,1ND).

Namibian Lukas takes an easy outing in Mexico to keep busy and destroys poor Macias in two rounds. Lukas had Macias down late in the first and then supplied a crushing ending in the second. With Macias pinned to the ropes Lukas landed a couple of thudding rights to the head that sent Macias tumbling to the canvas. Macias was badly hurt and the referee immediately stopped the fight looking for assistance for Macias. Lukas looked to be in line for a title shot after winning his first 23 fights but blew that when losing on points to Isaac Avelar in December. First fight since July 2017 for Macias and with 16 losses inside the distance and only two wins in his last 12 fights he needs to finally put the gloves away.

Mexico City, Mexico: Light: Jair Valtierra (14-0) W PTS 10 Jerson Aguilar (10-6).

Prospect Valtierra lifts his first title in his first ten round contest as he outpoints Aguilar to lift the WBA Latino belt. Valtierra controlled this one both a distance and inside with his quicker and more accurate punches. Aguilar never stopped coming forward but focusing on a body attack but Valtierra was willing to stand and trade and was winning the exchanges although the pressure from Aguilar made him fight hard in an entertaining contest. Scores 99-91 twice and 98-91 for 19-year-old Valtierra. First fight in almost two years for Aguilar.

Managua, Nicaragua: Light: Freddy Fonseca (29-5-1,1ND) W TKO 3 Eusebio Osejo (31-27-3,1ND). Fly: Wilmer Blas (8-16-6) W TEC DEC 6 Ernesto Irias (15-4-1). Super Bantam: Jose Gonzalez (15-0-2) W PTS 8 Luis Millan (17-4-0).

Fonseca vs. Osejo

Fonseca stops Osejo. Southpaw Osejo is a much better fighter than his record shows and he took the fight to Fonseca from the opening bell. Luckily he is no puncher and although he rattled Fonseca a few times he did not have the power to build on that. They were exchanging punches in the third when a left hook from Fonseca open a bad cut on the bridge of Oseja's nose and the fight was stopped due to the injury. Southpaw Fonseca, the older brother of Francesco who fought a draw for the IBO title against Alex Dilmaghani, is rebuilding after going 1-3 in fights in 2019 including a seventh round stoppage by Joseph Diaz. The Fonseca's must have something against poor Osejo as he was knocked out in one round by Francesco in August.

Blas vs. Irias

Blas wins technical decision over Irias. Not a great deal of skill on show here but plenty of action as they punched away wildly. Irias could have used his height and reach to make this easier for himself but he choose to just stand and trade punches with Blas leaving himself wide open to counters from the smaller man. Blas was getting the better of the exchanges until a clash of heads in the sixth saw him cut over his right eye which brought the fight to the end with all three judges having Blas 58-56 in front. Unexpected win for Blas who had been 2-5-1 before this fight. Irias had lost only one of his last 13 fights and had had fought a draw in Germany for the vacant WBC Silver fly title in 2019.

Gonzalez vs. Millan

New York southpaw Gonzalez boxes his way to a unanimous verdict over Venezuelan Millan. Gonzalez was too skilful for the limited Millan. Gonzalez was comfortable boxing on the back foot and found gaps for his right jab and strong straight lefts. Millan kept coming forward trying to apply pressure and that suited Gonzalez who was always in charge although never really having Millan in trouble. Scores 79-72 on the three

judge's cards for 24-year-old Gonzalez in his first fight outside of the USA. Millan's record is typical of so many padded Venezuelan records with his 17 victims having just 7 wins between them.

Moscow, Russia: Welter: Karen Chukhadzhyan (17-1) W PTS 8 Aleksei Evchenko (19-14-2). Super Welter: Mirzakamol Nematov (4-0) W KO 1 Marat Khuzeev (20-18-1).

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Chukhadzhyan vs. Evchenko

Routine win for German-based Ukrainian Chukhadzhyan (I wonder if I can convince him to use the ring name of Chuck. typing Chukhadzhyan and spelling it correctly is a stretch for my poor old brain). Scores 80-73 twice and 80-72. After losing his first fight Chukhadzhyan has now won 17 on the bounce. Survivor Evchenko has only lost once inside the distance.

Nematov vs. Khuzeev

This was supposed to test whether Nematov's was ready for ten rounds but he scotched that by flattening poor Khuzeev in just 42 seconds. On to the next victim for the 23-year-old Uzbek southpaw. Russian Khuzeev, 40, should find a nail for his gloves as he has lost his last ten fights all inside the distance and all inside three rounds

27 February

Berlin. Germany: Super Middle: William Scull (16-0) W PTS 12 Gino Kanters (8-4-2). Middle: Vincenzo Gualtieri (16-0-1) W PTS 12 Sofiane Khati (10-1). Super Welter: Haro Matevosyan (12-0,1ND) W KO 4 Stefano Castellucci (33-10). Middle: Thomas Piccirillo (8-0-2) W KO 9 Adam Amkhadov (7-2). Super Welter: Jama Saidi (18-2) W PTS 10 Tomi Silvennoinen (9-3). Light Heavy: Fabian Thiemke (6-0) W PTS 8 Taras Oleksiyenko (8-6).

Scull vs. Kanters

Cuban Scull comfortably outpoints Dutchman Kanters. Scull was quicker with higher level skills. Despite being in control from the start he never really managed put a stubborn Kanters in any deep trouble but also never allowed Kanters a toe-hold in the fight. Scores 120-108, 119-109 and 118-110 for Scull. The 28-year-old Scull collects the IBO Continental belt. Former kickboxing champion Kanters is now 4-2-2 in his last eight fights.

Gualtieri vs. Khati

In another IBO Continental title fight German Gualtieri outpoints Frenchman Khati. Gualtieri boxed well at distance taking no chances. He had the better jab and better mobility. Khati was occasionally dangerous but Gualtieri countered well with accuracy and just outworked Khati who tired late but remained competitive all the way. Scores 117-111, 117-112 and 116-112 for Gualtieri who returns to the winning column after fighting a draw with Thomas Piccirillo for the German title in August. This was the first fight for Khati in which he went past the sixth round so some good experience for him.

Matevosyan vs. Castellucci

Matevosyan brutalises Italian veteran Castellucci. The Armenian-born southpaw floored Castellucci in the first, twice more in the second and again in the third before getting the knockout in the fourth. Matevosyan collects the vacant IBF Inter-Continental title with his seventh victory by KO/TKO and the 39-year-old Castellucci suffers his fifth loss that way.

Piccirillo vs. Ankhadov

Italian-born Piccirillo wins the German title at the second attempt as he scores a brutal kayo of Russian-born Ankhadov a stable mate of Piccirillo. The fight was one-sided with Piccirillo clearly outboxing Ankhadov and finding the target with rights over Amkhadov's too low guard. Ankhadov only just survived the seventh then took more punishment in the eighth. Piccirillo ended it in the ninth. With a badly weakened Amkhadov trying

to come forward off the ropes Piccirillo landed a booming right to the head that saw Amkhadov pitch forward and finish up hitting the canvas head first and he was needlessly counted out. The unbeaten Piccirillo had outpointed Amkhadov in June and then drawn with Gualtieri in a challenge for the German title in August with Gualtieri then relinquishing the title. Amkhadov was taken to the hospital but later released.

Saidi vs. Silvennoinen

Saidi wins the vacant German International title with unanimous verdict over Silvennoinen. It was an even contest over the early rounds but then Saidi's fast accurate jabbing gave him the edge from the fifth. He tightened his guard against Silvennoinen's uppercuts which had been a danger in the opening rounds and he boxed his way to victory. Saidi's losses have come over twelve rounds against top level opposition in Jack Culcay and Vincent Feigenbutz. Silvennoinen was a good test having won 5 of his previous 6 outings.

Thiemke vs. Oleksiyenko

Light heavyweight hope Thiemke gets in some useful work as he goes eight rounds for the first time in decisioning strong Ukrainian Oleksiyenko. Thiemke boxed cleverly on the back foot taking no chances against the bigger man and won a wide unanimous decision. Still only 20 "The German Dream" was German Under-17 and Under-18 champion from 75kgs up to 91kgs and won European gold medals at Schoolboy and Junior level. Fifth consecutive loss for Oleksiyenko.

Berazategui, Argentina: Super Welter: Alejandro Silva (14-0-1) W DISQ 3 Gabriel Diaz (10-2). Super Welter: Diego Ramirez (22-4-1) DRAW 10 Nicolas Palacios (12-7-1). Super Welter: Jonathan Wilson Sanchez (18-4-1) W PTS 10 Nahuel Galesi (13-7-1).

Silva vs. Diaz

In the quarter-finals of the Miguel Angel Castellini tournament Silva gets win over Diaz who is disqualified for biting. The first

two rounds were entertaining as they traded punches. Silva was getting the better of the exchanges working on the inside on the taller Diaz and hurting him with hooks. In the third as Diaz came forward he ducked and his head ended under the left arm of Silva who had his forearm trapping Diaz's head in place. Just before the referee separated them Silva pulled away clutching his left arm and indicating to the referee he had been bitten. The teeth marks were clearly visible and Diaz was disqualified. Silva defending the national title and extends his winning streak to 12. Diaz, the Argentinian No 6, had scored victories in each of his last six fights.

Ramirez vs. Palacios

Southpaw Ramirez was a big favourite in this Tournament quarter-final but his recent form has been disappointing and he struggled here with a draw a fair result. Scores 97-95 ½ for Ramirez, 96- 95 ½ for Palacios, 95 ½-95 ½. Ramirez was rated No 2 and Palacios No 4 so Ramirez progresses to the semi-finals on the basis of his higher rating. Tough on Palacios but those are the rules of the tournament

Sanchez vs. Galesi

Sanchez eased his way into the semi-finals with a comfortable points win over Galesi. Scores 98-91, 98 ½-92, 97-92. Six wins in his last seven fights for former national middleweight title challenger Sanchez. At 5'3" Galesi was just too small to match the bigger Sanchez who is No 3 in the Argentinian middleweight rankings

Sao Paulo, Brazil: Heavy: Gonzalo Basile (76-14,1ND) W KO 1 Gilberto Matheus Domingos (22-13). Cruiser: Isaac Rodrigues (26-3) W KO 2 Jonathan Santos de Souza (3-8).

Basile vs. Matheus

Basile got this farce over quickly. After measuring the obese little Matheus with some left jabs Basile knocked him over with a left hook. Matheus got up but another left hook put him face

down on the canvas and he was counted out. The 46-year-old 6'6" Basile, a walking tattoo parlour, wins the vacant UBO International and American Boxing Federation American West belts. Matheus was terrible and to give you some idea of how obese Matheus was it was a major achievement for him to throw a jab that reached out beyond his paunch.

Rodrigues vs. Santos

Rodrigues floors Santos twice for kayo. After tracking the taller Santos in the first round Rodrigues connected with an uppercut and a right to the head that staggered Santos and put him down. Santos just beat the count but was floored by two more punches. The referee seemed to believe that the downed fighter did not need to know the count as he tolled it behind the fighters back with his hands pointing to the ring lights. It made no real difference as Santos failed to beat the count. First fight since August 2018 for 36-year-old Rodrigues and his 21st win by KO/TKO. Five inside the distance losses in a row for Santos

Usti nad Labem, Czech Republic: Light: Michal Dufek (30-22-2) W TKO 5 Szilveszter Ajtai (13-17-1). Super Light: Erik Agateljan (7-0) W PTS 10 Josef Zahradnik (12-5). Super Middle: Lukas Konecny (52-5) W TKO 5 Pavel Albrecht (6-9). Heavy: Tomas Salek W TKO 1 Alain Banongo (3-2).

Dufek vs. Berna

Veteran Dufek wins the vacant Czech title with stoppage of Hungarian substitute Ajtai. Dufek, 37, had Ajtai down five times before the fight was stopped in the fifth. Win No 5 in a row for Dufek and to stick with the "5's" the fifth different opponent he was supposed to face with the corona virus messing up his plans. Now six defeats in a row for Ajtai.

Agateljan vs. Zahradnik

First pro title for promising Agateljan as he outpoints Zahradnik. Over the first five rounds Zahradnik fought hard

and was competitive. From then the talented Agateljan took control and emerged a clear winner. Scores 99-91, 98-92 and 99-93. Armenian-born Agateljan 25, a former Czech Youth and Senior champion, won quote a few international tournaments. His brother Viktor won the Czech middleweight title in September and they are both good prospects. Zahradnik has been given some tough tasks losing decisions on the road against Jason Easton, Conor Benn and Eduard Troyanovsky.

Konecny vs. Albrecht

You could be excused for thinking that Konecny simply is boxing in the Czech Republic and you would be pretty well right. The 42-year-old former EBU and interim WBO champion promoted this show which featured 17 bouts and pulled his gloves on again to record a win. Fellow-Czech Albrecht did his best but was no match for Konecny and was stopped in the fifth round. Konecny "retired" after his last fight in December 2018 and has said he is retiring again-but never say never although he might decide to focus on helping his daughter who scored a win in an amateur fight on the show and wants to follow in his footsteps.

Salek vs. Banongo

In an all-Czech clash young heavyweight hope Salek halted Banongo in the first round. A huge right from Salek sent Banongo down heavily. He managed to get up but was reluctant to come forward when asked to by the referee who then stopped the fight. Now 6 wins in his last 7 fights for the 22-year-old Salek another former Czech Youth and Senior champion. First fight in two years for Banongo.

Beziers, France: Light: Jaouad Belmehdi (11-0-3) W TKO 1 Sabri Sediri (13-2-1).

Belmehdi delights his home supports as he blows away Sediri inside a round to win the vacant French title. Sediri came out throwing hooks from both hands. Belmehdi remained cool and less than a minute into the fight he connected with a right

uppercut and a left hook which floored Sediri. He was badly shaken but made it to his feet. Belmehdi bombarded Sediri with punches putting him down twice more and the fight was over. Sixth quick win for the 22-year-old new champion. It was a case of the biter bitten as Tunisian-born Sediri had won his last two fights in the first round. He had also floored unbeaten British hope Sam Maxwell twice before losing on a late stoppage so a god scalp for Belmehdi.

Almaty, Kazakhstan: Light: Nurtas Azhbenov (11-0) W PTS 10 Evgeny Smirnov (13-2-3). Cruiser: Kamshybek Kunkabayev (3-0) W RTD 6 Server Emurlaiev (23-2). Welter: Talgat Shayken (4-0) W PTS 8 Evgeny Pavko (18-4-1).

Azhbenov vs. Smirnov

Azhbenov outboxes Smirnov over ten rounds. Tall southpaw Azhbenov was able to use his edges in height and reach to box on the outside. Smirnov tried to get inside but counters from Azhbenov made him pay a price for his aggression. Smirnov too often just tracked Azhbenov around the ring being frustrated by the speedy movement and clever defensive work from Azhbenov. Smirnov chased hard all the way having occasional success when he managed to catch up with Azhbenov but did that too rarely as Azhbenov skipped his way to victory. Scores 100-90, 99-91 and 96-94 for Azhbenov. He wins the vacant WBC Asian Boxing Council belt. He has oodles of skill but a lack of power may be a drawback. Smirnov did a bit better than the scores indicate but he is now 0-1-3 in his last four outings.

Kunkabayev vs. Emurlaiev

Easy night's work for Kunkabayev. He never really had to get out of second gear against Emurlaiev who in his second fight in a week was just looking to survive; Kunkabayev seemed content to get in a few rounds of work before getting serious in the fifth connecting with some strong southpaw lefts. A big

right hook late in the sixth had Emurlaiev badly shaken and three lefts to the head before the bell were enough for Emurlaiev whom did not come out for the seventh round. The 29-year-old Kunkabayev won a silver medal at both the 2017 and 2019 World Championships. Emurlaiev was out of the ring for eight years before returning with a first round stoppage win last week

Shayken vs. Pavko

Shayken (Shaiken on his shorts) outboxes Pavko. With some good amateur credentials behind him Shayken already looks a bright prospect in the paid ranks. Pavko staggered Shayken with a punch within the first twenty seconds of the fight but Shayken quickly recovered and did enough to win the round. Shayken had edges in skill and speed and controlled the fight from the second. He also showed power as he rocked Pavko a few times with straight lefts but just could not put the tough Russian away. Scores 80-72 twice and 79-73 for Shayken. The 20-year-old Kazak is a former World Youth Olympics silver medal winner. Second loss in a row for Pavko who was outpointed by unbeaten Michael McKinson in his previous fight in July 2019.

Windhoek, Namibia: Feather: Nathanael Kakololo (12-1-1) W TKO 8 Tinashe Mwadziwana (17-13). Middle: Lukas Ndafoluma (19-3,1ND) W KO 1 Simon Tchetha (10-4-1). Kakololo vs. Mwadziwana

Kakololo floors and halts Zimbabwean Mwadziwana. Kakololo establish an early lead with his longer reach. Mwadziwana fought hard and managed to get past Kakololo's jab and score to the body. Kakololo had a big fourth connecting with hard shots and Mwadziwana only just got through the round. The Zimbabwean recovered over the fifth and sixth but was shaken again in the seventh and floored by a series of punches in the eighth. He made it to his feet but was in no condition to continue and the fight was stopped. Kakololo retains the ABU

title with his eighth consecutive victory. Mwadziwana had won his last five fights.

Ndafoluma vs. Tchetha

Ndafoluma crushes a seriously overmatched Tchetha inside a round. After just 20 seconds Ndafoluma drove Tchetha to the floor with two right crosses. Tchetha made it to his feet but was on rubber legs. Despite that the referee allowed him to continue and a right to the body from Ndafoluma put him down again and he took the full count kneeling in a corner. Ten wins by KO/TKO for the 35-year-old "Demolisher" who picks up the WBO African title. Malawian Tchetha never in with a chance.

London. England: Super Fly: Ijaz Ahmed (8-2) W PTS 10 Quaise Khademi (8-1). Middle: Nathan Heaney (11-0) W PTS 10 Ryan Oliver (7-3).

Ahmed vs. Khademi

Ahmed takes Khademi's unbeaten record with a narrow majority decision over ten entertaining rounds. With Khademi taller with a longer reach each fighter's tactics were governed by the physical difference. The 5'1" Ahmed was on fire over the first two rounds hunting Khademi down and scoring to the body. Over the third and fourth Khademi created some space with strong jabbing and evened the score. Ahmed upped his pace and outworked Khademi in the fifth and sixth but then seemed to fade and again Khademi took the next two rounds. It came down to the last two rounds and they fought their heart out with the decision undecided to the last. The judges were given a hard task but scored it 96-94 and 96-95 for Ahmed and 95-95. The 27-year-old from Birmingham wins the WBO European title from Khademi and the vacant IBF European title. In his last fight in November 2019 Ahmed had been beaten on points by Harvey Horn for the vacant WBO flyweight title. Afghan-born Khademi was making the first defence of the WBO title.

Heaney vs. Oliver

Heaney keeps his 100% record with points win over Oliver. Heaney was always just that bit better and he floored Oliver in the fifth with the referee scoring the match 97-92 for Heaney who will probably be looking to go for the English title next. Second loss in a row for Oliver.

Fight of the week (Significance): Saul Alvarez beating Avni Yildirim sets up Alvarez for unifying all four versions of the super middleweight title by the end of the year

Fight of the week (Entertainment): Francisco Rodriguez vs. Martin Tecuapetla was a war all the way. With honourable mention to Nicholas Esposito vs. Tobia Giuseppe Loriga providing plenty to enjoy in their Italian title fight.

Fighter of the week: Saul Alvarez as he marches on in his quest to unify the super middleweight division

Punch of the week: The right to the head from Thomas Piccirillo that put that put Adam Ankhadov face down on the canvas was brutal.

Upset of the week: Rene Mark Cuarto was an outsider against Pedro Taduran but won a close decision and the IBF minimumweight title

Prospect watch: Only one pro fight but I am going with lightweight Keyshawn Davis who oozed class against Lester Brown

Observations

Not a good weekend for the big fights. Alvarez vs. Yildirim was as expected a mismatch. Julio Cesar Martinez vs. McWilliams Arroyo looked a reasonable match but with Martinez pulling out with an injury instead Arroyo easily beat late substitute Abraham Rodriguez and both Joseph Parker vs. Junior Fa and Anthony Dirrell vs. Kyrone Davis lacked any entertainment value.

The line between professional and amateur is permanently blurred now. Keyshawn Davis has won his first pro fight but he

also won the US Olympic trials so will be aiming to go for gold in Tokyo and New Zealand `s Jerome Pampellone turned professional on 19 December 2020 and won the New Zealand amateur title on 23 January 2021.

Boxing is emerging from the pandemic. Over Friday and Saturday there were 36 shows in 24 countries.