



**TOP CONTENDER FRANK MARTIN DELIVERS DOMINANT,
STAR-MAKING PERFORMANCE IN VICTORY OVER MICHEL
RIVERA HEADLINING LIVE ON SHOWTIME® SATURDAY
NIGHT FROM THE COSMOPOLITAN OF LAS VEGAS**

***Vladimir Shishkin and Vincent Astrolabio Victorious In
Televised Undercard Bouts***

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LAS VEGAS – December 17, 2022 – Undefeated top contender Frank “The Ghost” Martin dominated from start to finish in winning a unanimous decision over the previously unbeaten Michel “La Zarza Ali” Rivera in a star-making performance and WBA Lightweight Title Eliminator that headlined action live on SHOWTIME Saturday night from The Chelsea inside The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas in an event presented by Premier Boxing Champions.

"This is just what I do," said Martin, who dropped Rivera in the seventh round and won by scores of 120-107, 118-109 and 117-110. "I felt good tonight. There were some things that I saw in there that I didn't capitalize on, but we went in there and got the job done. My corner was telling me to stay on the outside, watch out for the right hand and work the game plan. I was using my legs and I could have done it a lot more. It worked for us tonight, but there's a lot of room for improvement and we're going to keep working."

The 27-year-old Martin (25-0, 14 KOs) controlled the action throughout, showing superior speed and boxing acumen, as he quickly closed the reach advantage held by Rivera. Promoted by unified welterweight champion Errol Spence Jr. and coached by top trainer Derrick James, Martin has put himself into a prime position in the star-studded 135-pound division.

"It's a blessing to be in the gym with Errol and [undisputed 154-pound champion] Jermell [Charlo] and they keep me going," said Martin. "I'm always watching Errol when he's sparring and I'm always asking questions and looking to get better. Seeing champions on top like them, I'm getting nothing but game from them."

The 24-year-old Rivera (16-1, 12 KOs) seemed to struggle with Martin's southpaw attack, as he continuously ate straight left hands, especially in the early rounds. Rivera had his moments

where his length allowed him to land right hands, but Martin's footwork routinely allowed him to evade further damage.

"I went in there for a win, I didn't come here to lose," said Rivera. "I was feeling pretty good today, but by round four or five, I think I started to feel the effects of the weight cut. I don't make excuses, but I'm a big guy for the division."

In round seven Martin delivered his signature moment of the fight, putting Rivera down hard with a straight left-right hook combination. Rivera showed mettle in rising to his feet, but Martin kept the attack coming, mixing in even more body shots on his weary opponent.

"We believe in 'Man Down'," said Martin. "It's protect yourself at all times. He got caught slipping and he went down."

"I'm pretty fast, but you have to be faster to fight a guy like this," said Rivera. "I was too slow tonight. I tried to use my jab to keep him off me. He was the better guy today. I won't take anything away from him. I don't want to learn how to lose. I'm just going to work hard to win again. I don't want losing to feel normal. I work to win."

Martin held a statistical advantage according to CompuBox, outlanding Rivera 174 to 67 and connecting on 31% of his shots, compared to 15% for Rivera. Martin's defense was also key throughout, as he held Rivera below double-digit punches landed in every round. After the fight, Martin set his sights on the rest of the elite 135-pounders.

"I just believe in myself and I believe in our team," said Martin. "We know what we're doing and we're working consistently. We believed in it and believed that we're ready for any of the top fighters, so let us get them. We're ready to eat."

In the co-main event, unbeaten contender **Vladimir Shishkin** (14-0, 8 KOs) grinded out a hard-fought unanimous decision victory over former world champion **Jose Uzcategui** (32-5, 27 KOs) to win the IBF Super Middleweight Title Eliminator.

"I came to America, and I've been living here for the last few years, to reach my goal and become world champion," said Shishkin, who won by scores of 115-113 and 117-111 twice. "This is a big step in that direction. It was a big chance for me and I took advantage of it."

Both fighters came out aggressive from the outset, looking to land powerful right hands from close quarters. That toe-to-toe mentality maintained throughout the fight, as they frequently wrestled for position on the inside. As the fight progressed it was Shishkin's combination punching that helped separate him from Uzcategui on the judges' cards.

"I think I did enough to win the fight, but the judges didn't see it that way," said Uzcategui. "He was clutching and grabbing me and pulling me in, and I was never able to get enough clean shots."

Shishkin averaged 63 punches thrown per round, compared to Uzcategui's 43, and outlanded his opponent 38-20 over the final two frames. Round seven saw both fighters increase their aggression from the bell, but neither was able to seriously hurt the other, although both sported swelling over their eyes.

"I felt in control throughout the fight," said Shishkin. "I'm on a higher level now, so the fights are going to be tougher. He pushed me hard. It was something new for me."

With his strong finish, and a 238 to 162 overall edge in punches landed, Shishkin was able to clinch the victory. The win puts the unbeaten Shishkin into position to challenge for a title at 168 pounds.

"I want all the big names at 168 pounds," said Shishkin. "Canelo is the champion right now and I'll be ready to give him all he can handle."

In the telecast opener, **Vincent Astrolabio** (18-3, 13 KOs) scored an impressive and dominant sixth-round stoppage over **Nikolai Potapov** (23-3-1, 11 KOs) in their IBF Bantamweight Title Eliminator.

"I'm very happy with the victory," said Astrolabio. "This was my first time in the U.S. and I'm thankful to Manny Pacquiao and my whole team for this opportunity. I felt very strong against my opponent. Just like I did against Guillermo Rigondeaux, and that gave me confidence for this fight."

The Filipino Astrolabio started the bout in strong form, sending Potapov to the canvas for the first time in his career with a charging left hook late in round one. Potapov was able to get to his feet and gained some momentum in round two by countering the aggressive Astrolabio, winning the round on two judges' cards.

In round three however, Potapov took a clean punch that caused blood to start leaking out of his right eye, hindering his offensive output. In round four, Astrolabio caught him with another counter left hook, which stunned Potapov and forced him to take a knee in his corner.

As the fight hit round six, Astrolabio again upped his pressure and hurt Potapov midway through the round with a ferocious uppercut followed by a straight right hand. This proved to be the decisive blow, as referee Robert Hoyle counted Potapov out 1:26 into the round. At the time of the stoppage, Astrolabio held a 74-58 edge in punches landed and 56-45 advantage in power punches.

"I have nothing to say about my performance, he was just the better fighter tonight," said Potapov.

"I will fight whoever I'm able to, but my dream is to become world champion," said Astrolabio. "I want to fight for the belts. I'm so thankful that I had this and that I was able to give everyone a knockout. This is the biggest moment of my career and I'm going to keep pushing to fight the best."

Preceding the telecast, the SHOWTIME BOXING COUNTDOWN® show streamed live on the [SHOWTIME SPORTS YouTube channel](#) and [SHOWTIME Boxing Facebook page](#), topped by rising super lightweight **Omar "El Relámpago" Juarez** earning a unanimous decision over **Austin Dulay** after 10 rounds. Juarez was able to overcome three separate point deductions for low blows to win the bout by scores of 94-93 and 96-91 twice.

Opening the streaming presentation, 19-year-old prospect **Elijah Garcia** (13-0, 11 KOs) kept his unbeaten record intact with a blistering second-round stoppage of **Cruse Stewart** (8-2, 6 KOs) in their middleweight clash. Garcia stunned Stewart with a right hook before following up with a

barrage that put his opponent on the mat, forcing referee Robert Byrd to halt the action 1:33 into the round. The contest was the final in Byrd's storied career as a referee, having officiated over 100 title bouts and over 1,000 fights in total.

Veteran sportscaster **Brian Custer** hosted the SHOWTIME CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING® telecast while versatile combat sports voice **Mauro Ranallo** handled blow-by-blow action alongside Hall of Fame analyst **Al Bernstein** and three-division world champion **Abner Mares**. Two more Hall of Famers rounded out the telecast team – world-renowned ring announcer **Jimmy Lennon, Jr.** and boxing historian **Steve Farhood** as unofficial scorer. The executive producer was four-time Emmy award winner **David Dinkins, Jr.** with **Ray Smaltz III** producing and **Chuck McKean** directing. **SHOBOX: The New Generation** analyst **Brian Campbell** and his *MORNING KOMBAT* co-host **Luke Thomas** called the action during the live-stream bouts.

Saturday's SHOWTIME CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING telecast will replay Sunday, December 18 at 9 a.m. ET/PT on SHOWTIME and Monday, December 19 at 10 p.m. ET/PT on SHOWTIME EXTREME®.

The event was promoted by Man Down Promotions and TGB Promotions.

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