



## **ROLANDO “ROLLY” ROMERO WINS WBA SUPER LIGHTWEIGHT WORLD TITLE WITH UNEXPECTED NINTH-ROUND TKO OVER ISMAEL BARROSO LIVE ON SHOWTIME®**

***Rances Barthelemy and Kenneth Sims Jr., Earn Majority Decision Wins in Televised Undercard Bouts from The Chelsea at The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas***

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**LAS VEGAS – May 13, 2023** – Hard-hitting **Rolando “Rolly” Romero** fulfilled his lifelong dream of winning a world championship as the native Las Vegan recorded a ninth-round TKO against No. 1 contender **Ismael Barroso** trailing on all three judges’ scorecards to capture the vacant WBA Super Lightweight World Title on Saturday live on SHOWTIME from The Chelsea inside The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas headlining a Premier Boxing Champions event.

A year after he last stepped into the ring and suffered the first loss of his career, Romero’s arms were raised as “the new” world champion. The 27-year-old survived a third-round knockdown and came back to hand the 40-year-old Barroso (24-4-2, 22 KOs) a stunning defeat on SHOWTIME CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING® as many thought the fight was stopped prematurely by referee Tony Weeks, who waved off the contest at 2:41 of the ninth round.

“I’ll be honest, he’s a warrior and he should have been allowed to continue,” said Romero, who improved to 15-1 with 13 KOs and became the 89<sup>th</sup> fighter to perform on *SHOBOX: The New Generation* to go onto capture a world title. “He wanted to keep going and I wanted him to keep going as well.”

In his first fight at 140 pounds, Romero landed a powerful, pushing left hook that sent Barroso to the canvas in the ninth and when the fight resumed both fighters traded punches with Romero connecting on a powerful right, but missing on a left hook before Weeks stepped in and called the fight.

“The first punch was when I had him hurt to begin with,” Romero said. “It was right on the nose, it was a little clip.”

At the time of the stoppage, Romero was down on all three scorecards: 78-73, 77-74, 76-75.

"I think it was an injustice to stop the fight," said Barroso, a late replacement after Alberto Puello, who previously held the WBA 140-pound title, had been stripped of his title because of a failed VADA test. "I was landing the better shots. It was a push on the first knockdown. It wasn't a big blow or anything. The referee just stopped the fight, and he didn't say anything. You can see it clearly. I'm the one who's hitting him. There was nothing clear that he hit me with. I don't understand why they stopped the fight."

Barroso outlanded Romeo, 57-40, and threw 297 punches to 230 for Romero.

Romero was dropped by a strong Barroso left hand in the waning seconds of the third round as Romero touched the canvas for just the second time of his career as he was also knocked out by a Gervonta Davis left in his last fight a year ago.

"I boxed the entire time," said Romero, who became the second Las Vegas native to win a world title along with Ishe Smith. "I came in a little cold. I got cracked and I got up like a champion and kept going."

Romero was clear about his future intentions after the fight. "There's only two fights I want," he said. "There's the rematch with Tank Davis. But I think there's a much bigger option. I want to go after Ryan Garcia. We can do it on Showtime PPV."

In the co-main event, **Rances Barthelemy** (30-2-1, 15 KOs) bounced back from a stoppage loss last July to Gary Antuanne Russell to pick up an unpopular majority decision against **Omar Juarez** (14-2, 5 KOs) in a super lightweight bout. The former world champion at 130 and 135 pounds, Cuba's Barthelemy started quickly and ended it the same way as he won the first and second round and the ninth and 10<sup>th</sup> rounds on all three judges' cards. The scores were 95-95, 97-93 and 98-92 in favor of Barthelemy.

The crowd at The Chelsea rained down boos after the decision was read as many thought that Juarez had done enough to win the fight. "I understand that most of the fans are Mexican here and they were going for Juarez," Barthelemy said. "But I also had my Cuban fans and they were cheering."

It was a close fight based on the punch stats with Barthelemy winning the power punch category decidedly, 49% to 33%. "I tried to win this fight intelligently with my brains against a young fighter and that's what I did," Barthelemy said.

Barthelemy said he would love nothing more than a rematch with Russell. "I want a rematch even more than a title shot," he said. "I want that rematch with Gary Antuanne Russell. I want it badly."

The 23-year-old Juarez had his three-fight winning streak halted. "It is what it is," he said. "I honestly thought I did enough to win, but all That's left is keep working hard for next time. My one mistake was not staying on top of him. I should have been more aggressive."

In the telecast opener, **Kenneth Sims Jr.**, (20-2-1, 7 KOs) moved one step closer to a first world title shot as he out-dueled fellow top super lightweight contender **Batyr Akhmedov** (9-3, 8 KOs) in a thrilling WBA Super Lightweight World Title Eliminator that ended in a majority decision in favor of Sims, 116-112, 115-113 and 114-114. After the verdict was read by Jimmy Lennon Jr., Sims collapsed to the canvas and then sobbed into his father and trainer Kenneth Sims Sr.'s, chest following the biggest win of the 29-year-old's career.

The Chicago-born Sims now training in Las Vegas and the Los Angeles resident and Uzbekistan's Akhmedov combined to land 640 punches, the most thus far in 2023.

"This is what I've been waiting on for years," said Sims, who won for the seventh straight fight. "I'm not supposed to be here right now. That's what they say. Ain't nobody thought I would be here right now. And I know that I'm the best so at 140 it's whatever. I'm ready for anyone."

Akhmedov landed 331 punches to 309 for Sims in the close contest. Sims landed 46% of his power punches, compared to an equally impressive 40% for Akhmedov. In the championship rounds, Sims landed 87 power punches to Akhmedov's 82.

Both fighters continued to push the pace entering the 10<sup>th</sup> round with Sims' suffering swelling around his right eye that closed up as the all-action fight concluded.

"This is what I expected," said Sims, whose only two career losses came on **SHOBOX: The New Generation**<sup>®</sup> prospect series. "This is what I expected of him but I'm a savage. I'm a dog. I have that dog in me. And that's what I was saying during this whole time leading up to this that I had that dog in me and I was going to show them. My eye wasn't bothering me. I don't care. Like I said, 'I'm a savage.' I don't care.

"I want the winner of the main event. I want that title. That's it. Whoever wins the main event that's who I want."

Akhmedov thought he won the fight after suffering another close loss on the judges' cards. His previous two losses were also narrow defeats on points. "It's like every time I don't stop my opponent it's like they win," he said. "It seems like it's a goal against me. If they reach the 12th round it's like they already won and they're already celebrating because the judges give it to them. Look at the punch stats. It's the third time in a row. I won again. I'm winning rounds, I'm throwing more, I'm hurting him more. He's surviving seven rounds out of 12."

Prior to the telecast, action streaming live on the SHOWTIME SPORTS YouTube channel and SHOWTIME Boxing Facebook page saw **Starling Castillo** (18-1-1, 13 KOs) hand super lightweight prospect **Esteuri "El Puma" Suero** (12-1, 9 KOs) his first pro loss in a bizarre 10-round unanimous decision victory. Castillo won on all three scorecards, 94-93 and 95-92 twice, and benefitted from Suero being penalized three points, including two in round 10 for biting Castillo on the shoulder. Rising bantamweight prospect **Michael Angeletti** (8-0, 7 KOs) from New Orleans knocked down Venezuela's **Michell Banquez** (20-4, 14 KOs) and referee Chris Flores stepped in to stop the bout a minute later earning Angeletti the TKO in the eighth and final round at 1:15 of the frame. With a large contingent of supporters in attendance, **Justin Vilorio** (2-0, 2 KO) won his second fight since turning pro last month as the 18-year-old from Whittier looked solid in a fourth-round TKO stoppage (1:41) against Colombian **Pedro Pinillo** (5-2, 5 KOs) in a scheduled six-round super featherweight bout.

The event was promoted by Mayweather Promotions and TGB Promotions.

Saturday's SHOWTIME CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING telecast will replay Sunday, May 14 at 8:30 a.m. ET/PT on SHOWTIME and Tuesday, May 16 at 10 p.m. ET/PT on SHOWTIME EXTREME<sup>®</sup>.

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**. Three Hall of

Famers rounded out the telecast team –Emmy® award winning reporter **Jim Gray**, 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. Sportscaster **Alejandro Luna** called the action in Spanish on Secondary Audio Programming (SAP) with former world champion and *SHOBOX: The New Generation* commentator **Raúl “El Diamante” Marquez** serving as the expert analyst. The SHOWTIME BOXING COUNTDOWN show was hosted by award-winning *MORNING KOMBAT* live digital talk show hosts **Luke Thomas** and **Brian Campbell**, who also serves as an analyst alongside Marquez on *SHOBOX*.

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