

Sports Saturday

The New York Times

B O X I N G

De La Hoya Gets Title on Knockout in 2d

By RICK WEINBERG

Special to The New York Times

LAS VEGAS, Nev., July 29 — Oscar De La Hoya stunned Jorge Paez with a second-round knockout here at the M-G-M Grand Garden last night to capture the vacant World Boxing Organization lightweight championship.

De La Hoya, who was fighting for the first time at 135 pounds, knocked Paez to the canvas with a fierce and relentless flurry of rights and lefts to the head to end the fight at 39 seconds of the second round. Paez, who had been knocked out only once in his previous 63 bouts, lay on the canvas for nearly five minutes after the fight.

The victory left the 21-year-old De La Hoya undefeated at 14-0 with 13 knockouts. Paez, 28, dropped to 53-7-4.

Serious Mood Shows

De La Hoya lost a coin flip earlier in the week and was forced to enter the ring first. He didn't like that and his mood was reflected when he entered the ring with a serious expression uncharacteristic of the pleasant and charismatic fighter from Los Angeles.

Paez strolled into the ring in typical outrageous attire: red sparkled shorts with green tassels. He is called the clown prince of boxing, and on this night, he left no one laughing except De La Hoya and his fans.

Paez was the aggressor in the first

round, but De La Hoya won the round in the final two seconds with a combination left and right to Paez's head.

"I wanted to see what he would do because I didn't know if he was going to be a clown or be serious," De La Hoya said of his first round with Paez. "I wanted to study him and feel him out. I didn't want to come out fast."

De La Hoya came out too fast in his previous three fights. He was knocked down in the first round in two of them, although he wound up knocking out all three opponents.

'I Was More Focused'

But tonight, in the second round, De La Hoya unleashed a series of blows that stunned Paez, who collapsed to the canvas and was unable to get up.

"I was more focused and strong for this fight," said De La Hoya.

De La Hoya previously had fought at 130 pounds, a weight that left him weak in the late rounds. He said he felt stronger at 135 pounds, and proved it.

De La Hoya had been criticized for never having faced a fighter with name recognition in his brief pro career. The experienced Paez, who had 10 title fights to his credit, was widely perceived as De La Hoya's first true test.

On the undercard, Arthur Sarabian of Detroit ran his record to 9-0 with his eighth first-round knockout.

as he defeated Robert Straw of Evansville, Ind., in a four-round cruiserweight bout. Robert Garcia of Oxford, Calif., ran his record to 14-0 by posting a unanimous decision over San Diego's Orlando Euceda (6-2-1 and 3 knockouts) in a featherweight contest.

Also, John Walker (2-0) of Detroit won a unanimous decision over Utah's Justo Sanchez (4-5) in a four-round featherweight fight, and Derrick Banks (5-1) of Colorado Springs captured a unanimous decision over Jonathan Grant (1-1) of Las Vegas in a four-round heavyweight bout.