

# Sports Sunday

B O X I N G

## De La Hoya Wastes Little Time Proving a Tough Point

By RICK WEINBERG

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LAS VEGAS, Nev., July 30 — The steely, cold eyes and scowl was stunningly uncharacteristic of Oscar De La Hoya. When he enters a ring, he is usually grinning, not snorting. He is usually playfully bouncing around the ring, not circling it like a caged animal.

But De La Hoya had been transformed into a raging package of fury on Friday night at the MGM Grand Garden, where he met Jorge Paez for the World Boxing Organization lightweight championship and stunned Paez and the crowd of 8,011 with an electrifying knockout only 39 seconds into the second round.

"I'm a different fighter now: a better fighter, a stronger fighter," De La Hoya, the 21-year-old former Olympic champion, said.

He is also an angry fighter — at least he was on Friday.

The root of De La Hoya's rage is the yearlong criticism of him dodging big-name fighters. The Paez bout was considered his biggest challenge yet.

### Pounds for Power

De La Hoya was particularly irritated about losing a coin flip earlier in the week that forced him to enter the ring first. He hated the idea of making his grand entrance before Paez.

"He's used to being the last one in the ring," said De La Hoya's trainer, Robert Alcazar. "He likes that."

This was De La Hoya's first fight at 135 pounds in the lightweight division, and the five-pound increase increased De La Hoya's power and confidence. He also felt he had to win the hearts of Mexican fans who have had a love affair with Paez.

"I had a lot to prove," De La Hoya said. "And I proved it."

De La Hoya, only the second fighter to knock out Paez in 64 bouts, now plans to go on a three-month world tour of 10-round nontitle bouts in Mexico City, Japan and Africa. The tour begins in September. De La Hoya then expects to face the International Boxing Federation lightweight champion, Rafael Ruelas.

James Toney, who retained his

I.B.F. supermiddleweight championship with a 12th-round knockout of Charles Williams on Friday, plans to meet I.B.F. middleweight champion Roy Jones in mid-November. That bout will probably be much more eventful than Toney's agonizingly boring and sluggish effort Friday. The crowd booed the pace of the Toney-Williams bout, which was mostly fought against the ropes with both boxers tangled up like a pretzel.

"I wasn't surprised he held me," Toney said of Williams, who was finally flattened by a knockout punch with 25 seconds left in the final round. "That's the only way he knows how to fight. I came to fight. Holding is for sissies."