

Monte POOLE



S.F. show had Vegas ambience

SAN FRANCISCO — It was an evening of lap belts and what appeared to be a holstein, yet there was no report of a vehicle running into a cow.

There was a clashing of scents: the aroma of foot-long cigars drifting directly into the heady fragrance from enough perfume to stock the cosmetics counters of a dozen Macy's.

And, of course, there were women, flashing gaudy diamonds and hugging up to men wearing nothing less than the finest in penitentiary tattoos.

Just another night of championship boxing, Las Vegas style.

Only this time it was in the Bay Area.

Nearly four decades after the last title bout of note took place in San Francisco, the fights returned Saturday night to the arena formerly known as Civic Auditorium. It is now

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Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, and the late icon of entertainment promotions would have loved the atmosphere and the main event — if not necessarily the bush-league response of some immediately afterward.

World Boxing Council super featherweight champion Floyd Mayweather retained his title and remained undefeated (27-0), defeating Jesus Chavez (35-2) when the challenger's handlers called a halt to the bout before the 10th round.

Why did they do that? Because Mayweather was toying with their guy, feeding Chavez a steady diet of red meat. Leather, to be precise, which has been proven hazardous to one's health. Mayweather looked like the world-class fighter he is, while Chavez, who earned a career-high \$400,000, looked like a candidate for a tough-man contest.

It was not a bad call, for Chavez was thoroughly outclassed and had no chance. Yet a few idiots jeered and cranked up their arms to send debris toward ring. They acted as if they'd never seen championship boxing.

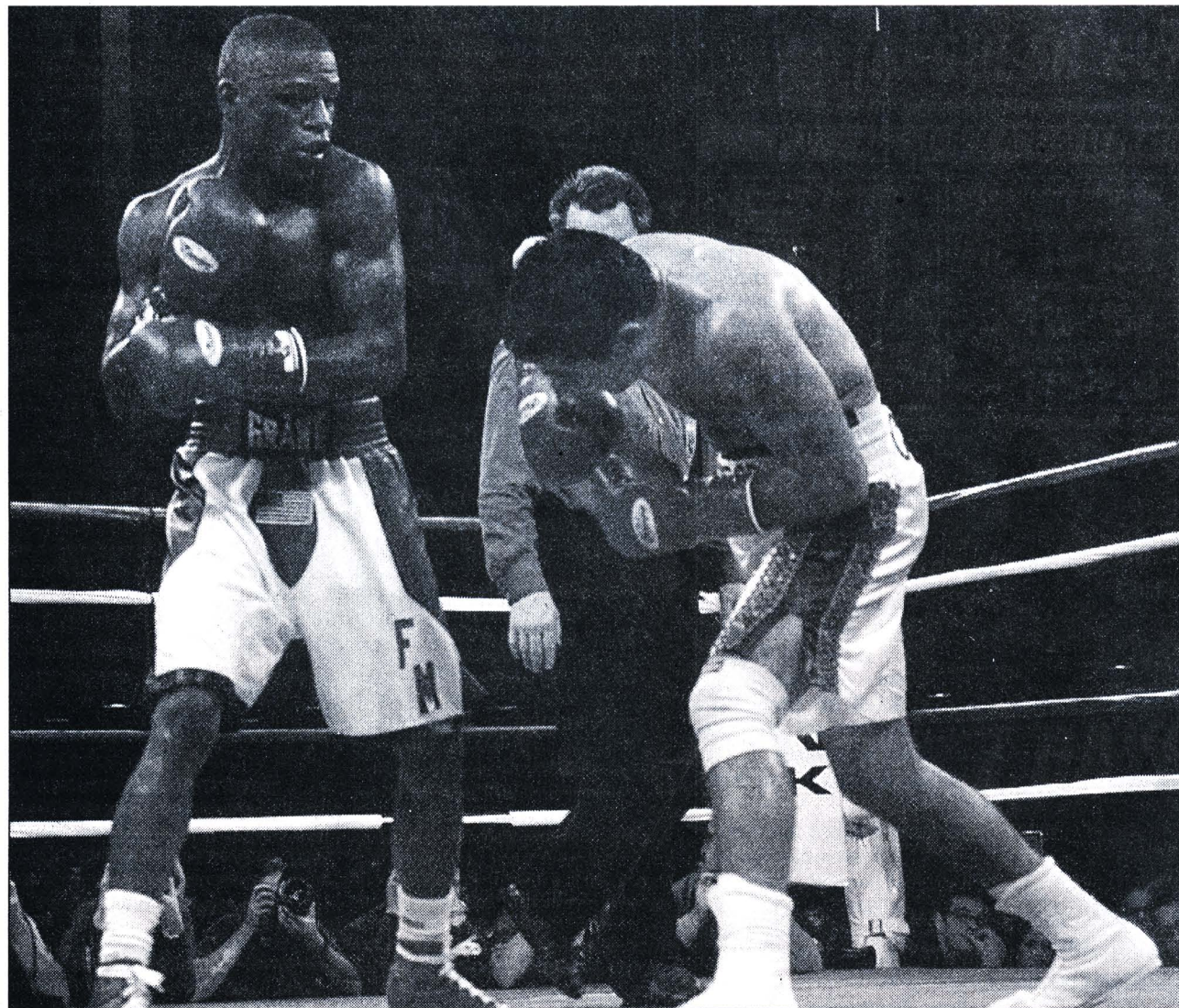
OK, most of them had not.

At least not before observing Manny Pacquiao of the Philippines retain his International Boxing Federation super bantamweight title minutes earlier, his bout with Brooklyn's Agapito Sanchez being stopped by the ringside doctor.

That didn't exactly go over smoothly, either, but the fact both fighters were bleeding seemed to soothe the most of the savages.

This was, after all, a new breed of local fight fans, sons and grandsons and daughters and granddaughters of the people who once flocked to old Civic and the Cow Palace and Candlestick Park and Kezar Stadium.

San Francisco hosted 13 title fights between 1952 and 1962. The Bay Area used to be Pughtown, what with epic battles taking place on both side of the Bay. If they weren't packing old Civic, they were filling the seats at the Oakland Auditorium.



WBC super featherweight undefeated champion "Pretty Boy" Floyd Mayweather punishes Jesus Chavez in the ninth round on Saturday night at Bill Graham Civic Auditorium in San Francisco. Mayweather won the match after Chavez didn't come out for round 10.

RAY CHAVEZ
— Staff

Pretty Boy defends WBC title

Mayweather stops Chavez after nine

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN FRANCISCO — Faced with a furious attack from Jesus Chavez, "Pretty Boy" Floyd Mayweather Jr. gave a lesson to yet another pretender to his title.

In front of an enthusiastic crowd at the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium for San Francisco's first major fight since 1986, Mayweather stopped Chavez before the 10th round on Saturday night to retain his WBC super featherweight championship.

Mayweather improved to 27-0, winning his eighth title defense. Afterward, Mayweather made the expected announcement that it would be his last fight at 130 pounds.

Chavez used a somewhat unorthodox strategy in his first shot at Mayweather after three years as the WBC's top-ranked contender.

Chavez, who hadn't received his title shot for three years because of immigration issues, punched desperately throughout the fight, swinging often without regard for his punches' destination while chasing Mayweather around the ring.

At times, Mayweather seemed to be a spectator to Chavez's fury just as much as the fans in the sold-out auditorium. Though a welt formed near the champion's right eye in the later rounds, he wasn't worried.

But as Chavez tired midway through the fight, Mayweather began landing punches to Chavez's head, though Mayweather never knocked him down.

Earlier on the card, Manny Pacquiao defended his IBF junior featherweight title when his fight with Agapito Sanchez was stopped in the sixth round.

But there has been almost no championship fight action here since Dick Tiger decisioned Gene Fullmer in October 1962. There was a faux title at stake in June 1992, when San Francisco middleweight Pat Lawlor was trounced by John David Jackson.

So this experience, delivered by Bob Arum of Top Rank and Peter Howes of Howes Entertainment in San Francisco, is new for just about everybody. If these fans don't quite understand proper fight night etiquette, they surely have ambience figured out.

Indeed, the show put on by the crowd nearly stood up to the performance by Mayweather, who earned \$1.6 million in the eighth defense of his belt. Bay Area fight fans bought every seat (7,100) at prices ranging from \$30 to \$200.

Which takes us back to the lap belts and the holstein.

The lap belts, or sequined attire allowing for all the body coverage of lap belts, were worn by several women.

The holstein, or what appeared to be the hide of the black-and-white cow famous for its milk, was fitted for and adorned by a man.

What would big-time boxing be without an abundance of tanned cleavage and designer suits?

This was nostalgia and new age all at once, folks standing in the pouring rain outside, soaking thousands of dollars worth of wardrobe, all to see men attempting to put serious hurt on other men.

This was an HBO production in all its splendid glory and exact details. There was at ring-

side Jim Lampley and his impeccable diction, Larry Merchant and his meandering adjectives, Big George Foreman and his priceless, if spurious, smile.

In the ring we got no less than Michael "Let's Get Ready To Rumble" Buffer. Buffer earned another quick \$15,000, even if it appeared he dressed himself in a dimly lit room. He wore the jacket from his black tuxedo and the pants from his gray tux.

Picky, picky.

Which we should not be. Not when so many braved such brutal traffic, with steadily pouring rain and long lines outside the auditorium. Not when Arum and Howes collaborated on such an apparent success.

This was the latest proof that boxing, which occasionally is targeted for obsolescence, will

survive as long as humans walk the earth. This is where high-tech meets low-rent in one awful, beautiful melting pot, all to witness blood and sweat hurtling through the air.

Moments after announcing the decision in the Mayweather-Chavez bout, as the throng was filing out, Buffer stood center ring and made an announcement.

"Bob Arum and Top Rank say they will be back," he boomed, "with World Championship boxing in San Francisco."

Never have truer words been spoken by a man connected to boxing.

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