

SPORTS

Mayweather stops Chavez after nine rounds

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Las Vegas resident Floyd Mayweather Jr. left the super featherweights behind with one more quick, calculated victory.

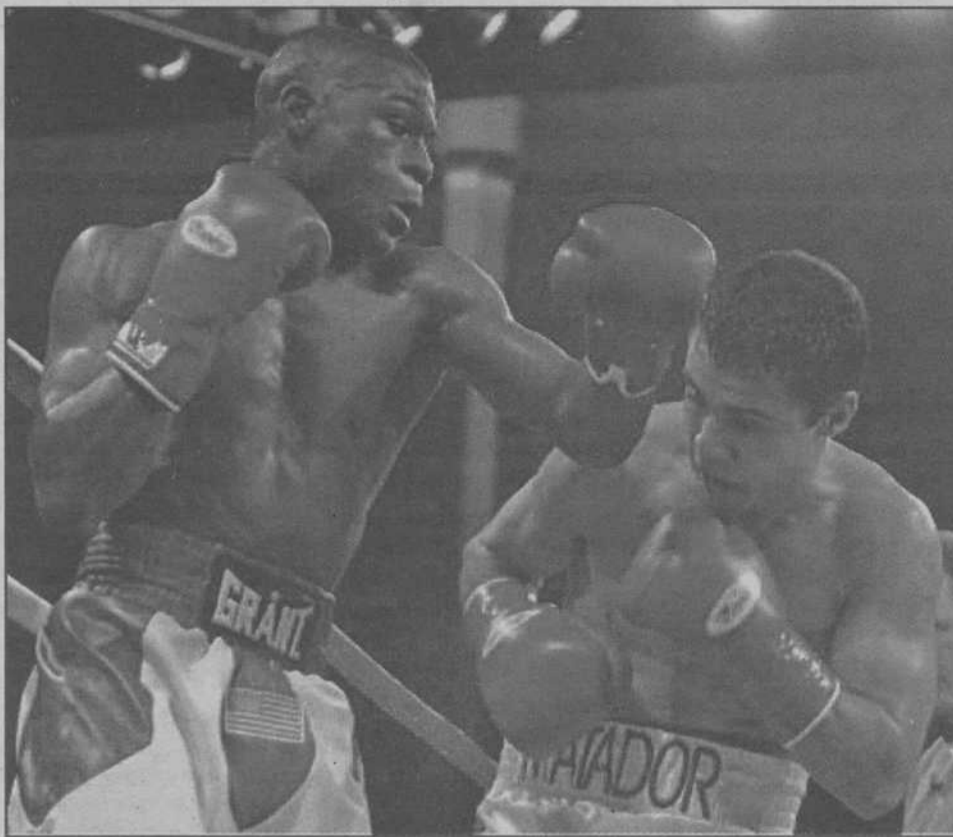
In front of an enthusiastic crowd at the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium for San Francisco's first major fight since 1986, Mayweather stopped Jesus Chavez before the 10th round on Saturday night to retain his WBC championship.

Mayweather improved to 27-0, winning his eighth title defense with his 20th career knockout - though less of the flair for which "Pretty Boy" is known.

Afterward, Mayweather made the expected announcement that it would be his last fight at 130 pounds; he hopes to soon fight Kostya Tszyu, who won the undisputed 140-pound title a week ago.

"I knew he was going to be strong in the early rounds, but in a big fight, you've got to be ready for every round," Mayweather said. "I think I was better in the late rounds."

Mayweather provided the perfect answers to Chavez's



Floyd Mayweather, left, throws a left at Jesus Chavez in the first round of the super featherweight bout Saturday, in San Francisco.

somewhat unorthodox strategy in the challenger's first shot at the champ 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.

"I knew he couldn't outbox me, but what he could do is come straight ahead," Mayweather said. "I said, 'I'm going to take my time, let him punch himself out and take it over from there.' That

was my whole game."

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 never appeared worried, even stopping between rounds to chat with HBO broadcasters.

It was a lesson for Chavez, who had precious few important fights among his 35 victories, which included 24 KOs. In his second loss, Chavez learned the value of letting an opponent's strengths work against him.

"My game plan was to take my time and stay focused," Mayweather said. "I let my experience work for me. He's got a lot more fights than me, but I've been in a lot more big fights than he has."

As Chavez tired midway through the fight, Mayweather regularly began landing punches to Chavez's head, though Mayweather never knocked him down. When referee Jon Schorle went to Chavez's corner after the ninth round, Schorle

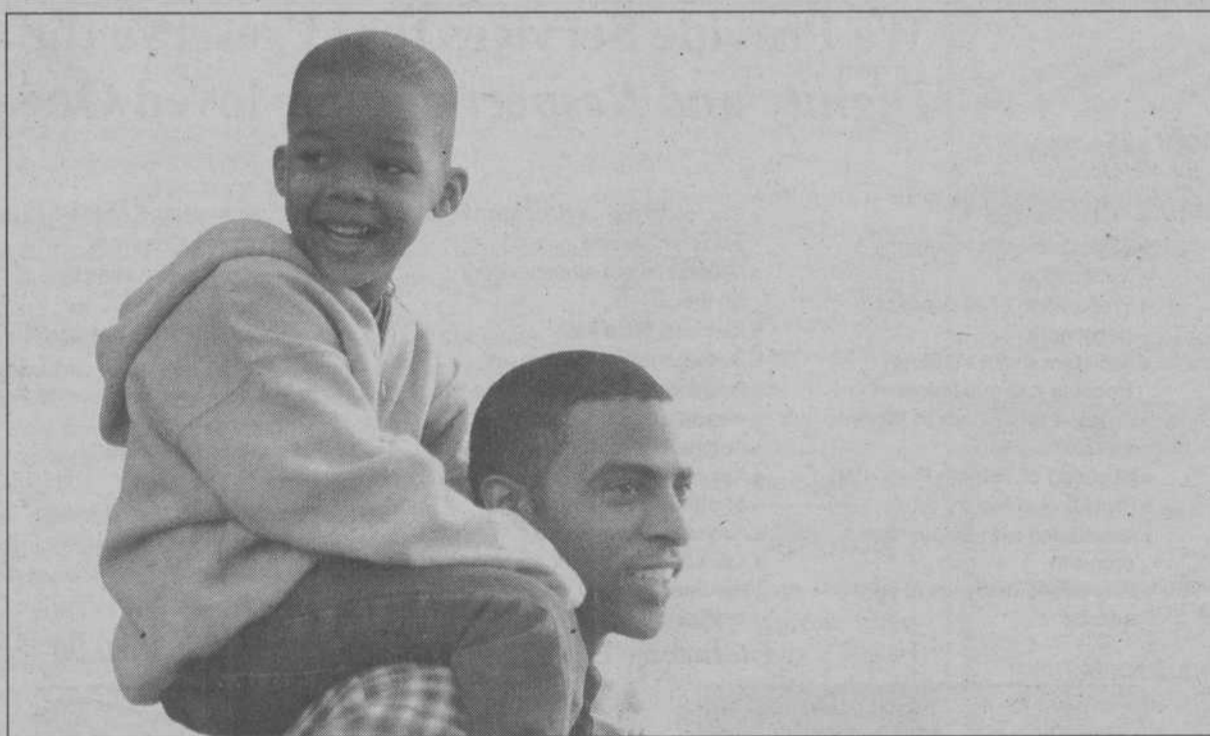
and cornerman Ronnie Shields decided to stop the fight.

"I agree with (Shields)," Chavez said. "I was getting hit. I was getting hurt. I think safety comes first. ... From now on, I'm going to be Floyd Mayweather's No. 1 fan."

Mayweather embraced Chavez after the fight, then praised Chavez's effort.

"He came to fight," Mayweather said. "I've had a lot of opponents that just came to survive, just came to get the check. I take my hat off to him. This is what boxing needs." Both fighters enjoyed their trip to San Francisco, where Gerry Cooney was the last big-name fighter to visit. The city's last important title bout was a 1962 middleweight fight between Gene Fullmer and Dick Tiger at Candlestick Park.

Earlier on the card, Manny Pacquiao defended his IBF junior featherweight title when his fight with Agapito Sanchez was stopped in the sixth round. Pacquiao battered Sanchez with flurries of punches, including low blows by both fighters.



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