

# Laila outclasses in win before dad

NEW YORK (AP) - Laila made daddy proud.

Laila Ali stopped a thoroughly outclassed Shelley Burton at 1:58 of the fourth round to defend her WBC women's super middle-weight championship Saturday night.

After throwing kisses to her father, boxing great Muhammad Ali, when she entered the ring, she made quick work of Burton. A left-right combination smashed Burton's nose and an eruption of blood fell to the canvas as referee Arthur Mercante Jr. stopped the bout.

"I wanted to knock her out cold," Laila Ali said, "but unfortunately she turned her back, which meant she didn't want any more."

Muhammad Ali, whose 1971 loss to Joe Frazier was

one of the Garden's most memorable fights, is 64 and suffering from Parkinson's disease. He entered the Garden riding a golf cart, got off and acknowledged the crowd of 14,260 that was chanting for him even while Manuel Medina and Kevin Kelley were in the ring fighting.

Then Ali sat down next to talk to Dustin Hoffman before he watched his 28-year-old daughter's performance.

"It's always great to have him here and have him see me fight," Laila said.

It was Laila's first bout in 11 months — her famous father was at that one, too — and she displayed no rust. Landing straight rights and looping ones, she easily penetrated Burton's defense. At the same time, she blocked nearly everything Burton threw.

After running her unbeaten record to 23-0 with 20 knockouts, Ali stood on the ropes in front of her father and waved. Ali stood up and waved back, got onto the golf cart and left the arena to loud cheers.

"I'm still on a high," said Laila Ali of fighting at the Garden. "I haven't come down from it yet. It feels great. They are true boxing fans at the Garden; fans appreciate the effort."

Burton fell to 8-3.



Laila Ali, right, punches Shelly Burton during the fourth round at Madison Square Garden in New York on Saturday. Muhammad Ali was on hand for his daughter's impressive win.

# College athletes excel in school

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) - NCAA president Myles Brand commended college athletes for their academic improvement recently, then criticized poor fact-checking by the media and government for failing to report the true story.

Brand said figures released by the NCAA last Thursday prove athletes often outperform their peers in the classroom and called any other notion a "myth."

The latest federal graduation rates show athletes are more likely than the general student body to earn a diploma, and that female athletes continue to post higher numbers than their male counterparts do.

"One of my most significant frustrations to read time and again is the mistaken myth that student-athletes are not good students," Brand said. "The federal government confirmed something we've known for a long time — that student-athletes are good students. There really is no excuse for getting this information wrong."

The latest measurements showed incoming athletes from the freshman class of 1999-2000 held a 2-point advantage, 63 percent to 61 percent, over those students who did not play sports. Athletes also had a 1-point overall increase over last year's

figures.

Federal graduation rates are calculated over a six-year period for each incoming freshman class.

Brand blamed the misperception on editorial writers and cited a letter from the House Ways and Means Committee, which is investigating the NCAA's tax-exempt status, to get the numbers right.

"Their claim that student-athletes don't perform well in the classroom is way off, and I think those wrong stories need to get their facts right," he said.

Academic reform has been Brand's top priority since taking over as president in 2003.

He presided over a movement that made eligibility standards for student-athletes more rigorous and created more stringent standards for freshmen to play. Brand also pushed for a new, more effective calculation to measure academic success among student-athletes.

Under the NCAA formula, called the Graduation Success Rate, 77 percent of student-athletes graduated. The NCAA's numbers were consistently higher than the federal rates.

The difference between the two calculations is that the federal rate does not in-

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