

Casimero retains light flyweight title

Written by Ryan Songalia
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Special to the Filipino Reporter

For Johnriel Casimero (pictured above), home is wherever he laces up his gloves.

The 23-year-old Casimero of Ormoc City, Philippines successfully defended his International Boxing Federation (IBF) light flyweight title for the second time with a unanimous decision victory over Luis Alberto Rios at the Megapolis Convention Center in Rios' hometown of Panama City, Panama.

The scores were 119-109 twice and 118-110 on the third card, all for Casimero.

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Casimero has now fought six of his last seven bouts away from home in five different countries.

Despite being about two inches shorter than his opponent at 5'4", Casimero (18-2, 10 knockouts) was able to control most of the action with his left jab, dipping away from the power shots of Rios (18-2-1, 13 KOs).

Casimero's own counter shots often fell short of the target due to the height and defensive posture of Rios, however.

There were no knockdowns in the fight, and neither man appeared to be visibly stunned.

Casimero won the title last February with a tenth round knockout of former titleholder Luis Lazarte in Argentina, knocking Lazarte down three times in the process.

After upsetting the hometown favorite, supporters of Lazarte stormed the ring, throwing bottles and chairs at Casimero and his team, forcing Casimero to seek refuge underneath the ring.

The Philippines filed a formal diplomatic protest with the Argentinian consulate in Manila afterwards.

Casimero is represented by Cebu-based promoter Sammy Gelloani and international matchmaker Sampson Lewkowicz, the man credited with first introducing Manny Pacquiao to America.

He is one of two Filipino boxers currently holding world titles at 108 pounds, with the other being World Boxing Organization (WBO) champion Donnie Nietes.

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