

Yoel Finol and Matthew McHale showed strong performance in their first fights at the AIBA World Boxing Championships

## **Description**

Boxers in the bantamweight (54kg) and heavyweight (+92kg) competed in the afternoon session of the fifth day at the AIBA World Boxing Championships in Belgrade to reach the last 16. Venezuela's number one Yoel Finol had an impressive start at the tournament during while Scotland's Matthew McHale also defeated a high-ranked opponent.

### **Venezuela's Yoel Finol started with outstanding bout in Belgrade**

Venezuela's talent Yoel Finol joined the national team in 2014 at the age of 18 and he claimed medals at the major international competitions. The Venezuelan had weight and training issues in the recent two years but one of the new categories, the bantamweight (54kg) is the perfect option for him. The southpaw had better footwork in the first round than Ukraine's new National Champion Yelmir Nabiiev and gained control of the bout. Finol had the full motivation in the first and second rounds and in the third one, he didn't take any risks.

"Thanks God, I could win my first important bout at the AIBA World Boxing Championships. The start is always difficult but I could make it. This new weight class is better for me and I had the full concentration in the first round to take the lead. I had many difficulties but I am ready to win also the next contest."

Yoel Finol (VEN)

### **Spain's Gabriel Escobar won another bout of the day**

Gabriel Escobar from Spain and Daniel Asenov from Bulgaria knew each other from major championships since 2017, they fought several times for the titles. Both boxers prepared strong strategies for today but Asenov moved ahead more for Escobar's advantage. The European Games winner from Spain danced in the ring and landed counter-attacks from all of the possible angles in the first round making a massive advantage. Escobar moved a lot on his feet and his strategy worked better today to eliminate one of the top bantamweight (54kg) boxers of the world.

"This was my sixth fight against the Bulgarian boxer. I prepared with strong strategy which was based on my footwork and speed. It was an important bout and a good start here at the AIBA World Boxing Championships."

Gabriel Escobar (ESP)

### **Uzbekistan's Shakhobiddin Zoirov eliminated another favorite on Day 5**

Uzbekistan lost two of its top stars during the preliminaries, Hasanboy Dusmatov and Mirazizbek Mirzakhilov, therefore, the defending AIBA World Champion Shakhobiddin Zoirov was highly motivated in his starting bout in Belgrade. The 28-year-old Uzbek controlled the middle of the ring against Tamir Galanov who claimed the bronze medal at the Hamburg 2017 AIBA World Boxing Championships and switched to Serbia. Zoirov landed more punches than his smaller opponent while his footwork was also better today in one of the final-level bouts of the session. The experienced Uzbek eliminated a dangerous rival and joined the last 16 of the bantamweight (54kg).

"It is hard to fight against a host nation's boxer at the major Championships. All bouts have their own difficulties but I tried to follow the instructions and I won. The coaches followed the scores and encouraged me between the rounds. I tried to work from longer distance in the third round today."

Shakhobiddin Zoirov (UZB)

### **Matthew McHale is the new Scottish hero**

Scotland's Matthew McHale received the right to compete in a major Championships for the very first time and arrived in Belgrade after strong preparations. He competed in several international tournaments and used the year to improve his skills. The Scottish boxer had difficulties in the first round against the RBF Team National Champion Kurban

Bairanbekov. His coach Mike Keane motivated him during the first break, and the boxer was able to change his rhythm. The Scottish caught the Russian boxer at the beginning of the second round and Bairanbekov lost control and confidence in this contest. The Scottish had the power and stamina in the third to beat his opponent in the bantamweight (54kg) to deliver his career highlight.

“This tournament is a very important step for me on my road. The strategy before the bout was to use my strong jab as many times as possible. After the first round my coaches inspired me to do more and I landed enough punches to beat my Russian opponent. This is a wonderful moment for Scotland’s boxing, thanks for my coaches and those who supported me.”

Matthew McHale (SCO)

### **Italy’s Aziz Abbes Mouhiidine showed his excellent technical skills**

Italy’s Aziz Abbes Mouhiidine started his campaign on the international stage at the super heavyweight (+92kg) but he moved down one category in 2018 where he could achieve better results. The EUBC European U22 Champion had a strong rival, Croatia’s Toni Filipi who earned medals in all levels of boxing – Youth, U22 and Elite at the European Championships. The Italian controlled the exchanges with his speed and he looked confident from the first seconds against the 25-year-old Croatian. Mouhiidine enjoyed the bout, everything went according to his plans and eliminated the experienced Croatian.

“I was not nervous in this bout as I knew I can beat my Croatian opponent who is an excellent boxer. I used my strengths very well. My footwork was a key to success in today’s bout, I developed it strongly in the recent years.”

Aziz Abbes Mouhiidine (ITA)

<https://www.aiba.org/blog/yoel-finol-and-matthew-mchale-showed-strong-performance-in-their-first-fights-at-the-aiba-world-boxing-championships/>