

Carlos Baldomir vs. Hometown Hero

Written by Robert Mladinich
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Four days before his showdown with undisputed welterweight champion Zab Judah at Madison Square Garden on January 7, Carlos Baldomir of Santa Fe, Argentina, exuded mucho confidence as he worked out before the media at the Church Street Gym in downtown Manhattan.

“It is an honor for me to be fighting at Madison Square Garden,” said the rugged looking 34-year-old Baldomir, whose record is 41-9-6 (12 KOs). “I am happy that Judah is confident, but after two or three rounds I will rip his head off. He is in for a surprise.”

While the knockout ratio of Baldomir’s record indicates that he might not be ripping anyone’s head off, an examination of the rest of his record shows that he is not to be taken lightly.

He has more than held his own against local fighters in Denmark, Germany, England, Italy, and South Africa. He stopped previously undefeated Alpasian Aguzum, 21-0, in Germany. He also stopped Aguzum in a rematch, when Aguzum was 29-1.

Baldomir also won a 12-round decision and fought to a draw with Hassan Ali in Denmark; beat Joshua Clottey by 11th round disqualification in England; stopped Dejan Zivkovic in eight rounds in Italy; and fought to a draw with Dingaan Thobela in South Africa.

“Carlos is the personification of heart,” said Michael Marley, an advisor for the San Diego-based Suycuan Ringside Promotions, who promote Baldomir as well as Jorge Paez Jr., Joan Guzman, Israel Vasquez, and Julio Diaz.

“This guy is a real road warrior whose passport has been punched more than he has. This is the first time he has had a promoter looking out for him, so don’t be surprised if he surprises you.”

Marley said you don’t have to look past Baldomir’s last fight, a 12-round decision victory over the Don King-promoted Mexican Miguel Angel Rodriguez in Chicago to realize he is not in New York to just pick up a check.

Rodriguez, who was 26-1 (21 KOs) going into the title elimination bout, was heavily favored to win. “Carlos beat him on heart, experience and balls,” said Marley. “Rodriguez was a great prospect, but Carlos shut him down.”

Baldomir admits that Judah is quick and strong, but says he is unconcerned with all the hoopla surrounding him. Nor could he care less about fighting in Judah’s hometown.

“I fought a lot of local fighters in their hometowns,” said Baldomir. “For me it is great that people think Judah is one of the best pound-for-pound fighters in the world. But who has he beaten? Cory Spinks? He hasn’t beaten anyone else at 147 [pounds].”

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When asked about the throat-slashing gesture that Judah displayed to him at a previous press conference, Baldomir just shrugged.

“For someone of my age and with my experience that means nothing,” he said. “The fact that he did it in front of other people only encourages me more. I’ve fought lefties and righties, punchers and boxers. Judah brings nothing that I haven’t seen before.”

One thing that Judah might be underestimating is the rich legacy of Argentinean fighters, many of whom are known for being inhumanly rugged.

Who can forget the great middleweight champion Carlos Monzon, who was Baldomir’s childhood hero, heavyweight contender Oscar Bonavena, multi-division champion Jorge Castro, who also engaged in well over 100 fights, or Juan Domingo Roldan, the only fighter to ever knock Marvin Hagler down?

“They were all my heroes and some are or were my friends,” said Baldomir, the married father of four children who range in age from 16 to three. “They are why I started boxing.”

Baldomir engaged in his first amateur pro fight at the age of 14. There has been nothing else he has wanted to do ever since. His wife Graciella was initially reluctant to support her husband’s choice of a vocation, but has since grown accustomed to it.

“She knows that I do it for the family,” said Baldomir. “I want my children to have an easier life than we have had. I want them to go to college and to be book smart. I fight for their future, so I can’t disappoint them.”

Marley says that regardless of what Judah brings to the table Saturday night, the fans won’t be disappointed with Baldomir’s performance.

“This kid has a real legend on his team,” said Marley. “Amilcar Brusa is one of the most respected trainers in South America. He walks on water down there because he has worked with so many champions. He wouldn’t be working with Carlos if he didn’t think he had championship potential.

“I’m not going to make predictions, but I’ll say this,” deadpanned Marley. “If the fight goes 12 rounds, Carlos will be on his feet at the end.”