

Ricardo Mayorga: Where there's no smoke there's fire

Written by Rick Folstad
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Better tighten your chin strap an extra hole, Oscar. Run an extra mile, spar an extra round, spend an extra hour in the gym.

Don't sing, don't tell jokes, don't call home and don't stay up late. Get mean, get ugly, get tough and get ready. Because that's what Ricardo "EL Matador" Mayorga is doing. He's taking this fight personal, hates you like you killed his dog, stole his wife and scratched his Mercedes.

Just how serious is the maniacal Mayorga? Well, he's down to smoking three or four cigarettes a day instead of two or three packs. And – better grab a seat – there's reportedly no beer in camp. None, zero, nada, el zippo. At least for now.

In the immortal words of Keith Jackson, "Whoa Nellie."

If it all sounds a little over the top, remember that Mayorga (28-5-1, 23 KOs) likes Oscar De La Hoya (37-4, 29 KOs) about as much as he likes dental surgery. He can't give you a solid reason for his dislike, he just knows that Oscar will never be invited to his home for dinner.

"Simply put, I just don't like him," Mayorga said on a recent conference call promoting their WBC super-welterweight title fight on May 6 at the MGM Grand Arena in Las Vegas (HBO pay-per-view). "Like I said before, I not only want to stop him, I want to stop his heart. Or detach his retina. One of the two."

Solid fight plan.

Asked to elaborate a little, Mayorga drove the point home.

"Just like in the schoolyard," he said through a translator. "There's a kid you never met once in your life, and you see him and you just don't like him. That's the best analogy I can use. I just don't like him. There's really no explanation behind it.

Well, there's that Julio Cesar Chavez thing.

Mayorga said when De La Hoya beat the legendary Chavez back in June 1996 (and again in September 1998), he decided he would some day make De La Hoya pay for "beating one of my idols."

It's a little weak on the "revenge" meter, but it's good enough for Mayorga, who appears to be sticking with his fight plan.

"I'm going to detach his retina or stop his heart," he repeated for those who might have missed it the second and third time around.

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There was also that little episode where the two fighters traded insults surrounding the women in their lives, Mayorga saying he'd let De La Hoya have his WBC title belt for the night if he could have Oscar's wife for the night.

According to Mayorga, Oscar responded that instead of his wife, he was going to spend the night with Mayorga's mother.

Just a little friendly banter.

"That's when I went off on him," Mayorga said. "I'm going to knock him out."

On the plus side, Mayorga said his strong hatred of De La Hoya has caused him to train harder than he has in the past. That means reporting to the gym without a pack of Marlboros rolled up in his sleeve and a six-pack of Bud on the front seat of his car.

"Obviously, this is the biggest fight of my career," he said.

In case Oscar is thinking about mending fences after the fight, Mayorga offered this friendly message: "He shouldn't even think about greeting me or saluting me after the fight, because I'm going to kick him out of the ring."

If the fight with Oscar goes as Mayorga predicts – "I'm going to demolish him" – another big fight is apparently already in the works.

According to promoter Don King, former champ and on-again, off-again boxing retiree Felix Trinidad, who stopped Mayorga in October 2004, is waiting in the wings.

"(Trinidad) will give Ricardo a chance for revenge," King said on the same conference call. "Mayorga knocks out Oscar. Helloo Trinidad. Felix is coming to Las Vegas. He's already got his tickets to the fight."

And when he's done demolishing De La Hoya and scraping the canvas with Trinidad, Mayorga wants – drum roll, please – Floyd Mayweather.

"I want Tito and I want Floyd," Mayorga said, maybe not focusing on De La Hoya quite like he should.

The good news for De La Hoya is, King predicted that Mayorga would knock him out. A couple weeks ago, King also predicted Zab Judah would knock out Mayweather. We know what happened with that one.

"Zab didn't throw punches," King said when reminded he didn't fare too well in his last pick. "As the fight went on, Zab went back to not throwing punches. With Mayorga, you won't have a shortage of punches."

Asked what he'd do different if he had a rematch with Trinidad, Mayorga said he'd fight him

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exactly like he fought him the first time.

“But I’d do a little more training,” he said.

Maybe knock it down to two cigarettes a day.