

David The Destroyer Lopez: Another Gem from the Diamond

Written by Phil Woolever

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TOHONO O'ODHAM NATION – Sometimes the boundary of a neighborhood's fistic devotion spreads across social and national borders, extending beyond miles, kilometers, whatever.

David "The Destroyer" Lopez provided another example of that on August 25th, in a sparsely occupied area of the desert where, on recent occasions, folks have gathered to primal scream his name.

It may be more than a twelve round's drive time from Lopez's hometown of Nogales, but judging from the boisterous homeboys that consistently fill Desert Diamond Casino's arena when their ganador appears, it might as well be considered Lopez's backyard.

Whatever the marquee hinted, Lopez was the star of the casino's latest presentation. "The Contender" angle was well marketed, featuring last season's Ishe Smith in action, and this season's local contestant Nito Bravo in heavy rotation on the promo front.

Rising commodity Smith's brief affair (TKO 2) with willing but unable Oscar Gonzalez was listed as the night's primary contest, sharing televised tiempo for TeleFutura Solo Boxeo with a fine duel between slick but vulnerable winner Martin Honorio and unbowed Baudel Cardenas.

Lopez knows plenty about the ups and downs on that road to contention himself and stole the excellent show before an unofficial count of over two thousand fans, almost all of whom stuck around for Lopez's no walk out bout against Sergio Rios.

Actually, it was only a battle on paper. Lopez blew Rios, 18-6 (16), out at 1:39 of the opening frame. Nobody seemed to mind. Indeed, it was what the howlers wanted to see.

"I seemed to make the people happy, so I'm happy," said a rejuvenated Lopez, now 27-13 (17), who was coming off a June stoppage of Epifanio Mendoza.

An earlier quartet of entertaining scraps could have satisfied most observational appetites. Shane Mosley, who had to catch a flight on the promotional end, was just about the only guy to leave before Lopez hit the duke out din, underneath the long, multi-angled turquoise light that helps define the arena's unique, broadly tiered effects.

Talk about your last but definitely not least scenario. The designated special attraction might have sold the place out on its own.

Six-foot-two-inch Lopez fought much taller than Rios could. Both men weighed 161. Lopez took his time for a looming moment as they circled. Then he fired a huge, straight lead right that dumped Rios into the ropes, then onto his back in dreamland. Referee Nico Perez waved it over as Rios wobbled up incoherently at the end of the count.

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Twenty-eight-year-old Lopez re-signed with Golden Boy Promotions prior to the Rios romp. He may have a new lease on life inside the strands, but that doesn't erase mileage from many a maul since he turned pro in 1995, at age seventeen.

Nogales is another of those hard-edged, dual and sometimes dueling Mexico/US border towns that still has blossoming beauty amidst the cactus-like thorns of everyday life for most of those on the Sonoran side, where Lopez resides.

On the US side, less than a wadded up package of contraband's throw away, plenty of punch addicts are on the growing Lopez bandwagon. Since everybody between here and Tucson, about sixty miles north, knows about the increased checkpoints and Border Patrol since 9-11, it's usually a quick, safe sprint of less than 45 minutes to Desert Diamond

Para Engles, press two.

"This was a good, quick fight for me," said Lopez, without adding how easy the bout was. "Everything worked the way I wanted. I'm planning for a big fight in November so I can't risk a head butt or any accidents. The sooner (the win) the better."

Lopez hit the losing end of a TKO stoppage stumbling block against Fulgencio Zuniga in June '05. Undeterred, he stopped Shay Mobley last January and recovered previous momentum against the favored Mendoza. From the looks of how he creamed Rios, Lopez is back on track.

"I tried to get Zuniga to sign for another fight but he was asking for too much money," said Lopez. "I'm not thinking about him any more. I'm at a different level now. I may know in a week or two who I'll be fighting next. I'll take a little time off, but not too much."

Lopez may see greener pastures on bigger casino farms within a couple more fights. He could probably make a fine living setting up camp outside Desert Diamond. Part of the parking lot turns into an RV park as the snowbirds arrive, so there's plenty of room.

Neighborhood status could be defined by one touching post-fight scene, as dozens of heartfelt crooners sang traditional songs in the rain and waited for Lopez to receive his extended family congratulations.

Even the most popular guys on the block don't usually get backyard serenades like that.