

## Can Carbajal get back in Cruz control?

Written by Ralph Gonzalez

Tuesday, 03 October 2006 19:00

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Former WBO bantamweight champion Cruz Carbajal (26-13, 22 KO's) chases armadillos to help keep fit when he's back home in Veracruz, Mexico. "It's great exercise, I go out with a net and a flashlight, I catch them and bring them home," said Carbajal from his training camp now located in San Diego, California. Unfortunately for the armadillos, Carbajal also claims that they're good eatin'. "It's good for you. I also hunt rabbits and do a lot of fishing. In fact most of my diet consists of different kinds of fish, shrimp and an occasional armadillo," says Carbajal. It's all part of Carbajal's Spartan lifestyle that currently keeps him at a walking around weight of about 125 pounds.

The first time I saw Carbajal fight was at the Pechanga Casino in March of 2005. He left quite an impression on me and my colleagues on press row. Looking at the bout sheet which is usually handed out by the commission or the promoter of the event, I saw the twelve losses on his record and shook my head. Not being familiar with Carbajal, I dismissed him and his chances against his difficult opponent for the night.

He was facing the speedy and powerful fighter out of Mexico City, Jorge Lacierva, who was on a seven fight win streak. Lacierva had looked like a world beater in dispatching Harold Grey in one round at this very same venue. I patted myself on the back once the fight started for being so knowledgeable and intuitive when it came to my boxing. Lacierva was doing quite a paint job on Carbajal as he used his incredible speed to land brutal uppercuts that shook the former world champ and then cut him. It looked like a bad ending was unavoidable for Carbajal. I was sure that the Veracruz native would wilt under the heated conditions that Lacierva was creating.

Carbajal kept stalking and targeting Lacierva's body, successfully landing a shot here and there. Putting "money in the bank" with those shots as the great Bernard Hopkins would say. It didn't seem like much compared to what Lacierva was landing. Carbajal cashed in his "savings" in the sixth round when his powerful punches took a toll on Lacierva and the Mexico City fighter called it quits before the seventh. Carbajal had subdued the 26-5 fighter in an impressive comeback. He had absorbed many shots in order to land his own but he was sure Lacierva would crumble. "He was very strong and fast with plenty of movement and I felt like I had to take his legs from him. Once I was able to land my punches he couldn't stand the power," said Carbajal. It was especially impressive since he took the fight on twelve days notice and had been inactive for eleven months.

The win seemed so remarkable that it made you wonder how a fighter like this had so many losses. The answer is that Carbajal is one of many fighters who made a habit of taking fights on short notice, in opponents' backyards, and even when he's not at his healthiest. Carbajal, like the rest of us, needs to make money and the cash was usually too good to resist when called in as a late minute, replacement fighter. "Those losses came early in my career. I was fighting for the money. It made sense to take the better purses during those times," he explained.

Sounds like a case of a promising fighter not being properly steered by his management.

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He's hoping that his new manager, Bobby DePhilippis, will guide him through boxing's murky waters. "I'm really excited about Bobby D managing me and everything that's happening around this promotion. This is part of my comeback and the goal is to win a world title again," said Carbajal. Carbajal will headline the main event of a six-bout card in downtown San Diego's Golden Hall on Thursday night.

Carbajal's last major fight was a loss to Silence Mbuza who was just "silenced" by Bantamweight king Rafael Marquez. It was an IBF eliminator to decide who would fight the aforementioned Marquez. Mbuza beat Carbajal in a fight where the Veracruzano reportedly fought ill. "During the week of the fight I got sick due to problems with my pancreas and it just sapped me of all my energy and strength. I just couldn't fight my fight. I wasn't about to cancel because I thought there might be a chance I'd get better and the money was good too. I was fighting in pain and I couldn't get my shots off like I usually do," says Carbajal of the unanimous decision loss to the South African.

Carbajal, 32, won the Mexican bantamweight title with a sixth round stoppage of Alejandro Estrada in 2001 and then defended the title with a split decision win over Hugo Dianzo. He won the WBO title with a ninth round TKO over the well regarded Mauricio Martinez in March of 2002. He defended his world title for the first time against Danny Romero with a fourth round knockout in front of Romero's hometown fans in Albuquerque. "I was in his territory but I was also in great shape and wasn't about to let this opportunity pass me by. Winning a Mexican title, a world title and defending it were some of the goals I had set for myself in boxing and there was no way I was going to lose that night," says Carbajal.

Carbajal also defended against the rugged Gerardo "Locomotor" Espinoza with a tenth round knockout as well as stopping Steven Dotse before making a questionable move that would cost him dearly. Carbajal took his title to Thailand to defend against Ratanai Sor Vorapin. Anyone that knows the boxing business understands that taking a fighter to a foreign land to defend a title poses a major risk. But the pay is usually better if you travel afar. So off went Carbajal.

Carbajal's fight against Sor Vorapin was a disaster on many levels. He lost by a wide margin on the cards that he feels were stacked against him. It didn't help that he arrived in Thailand only three days before the fight on a seventeen hour flight. "I'll never admit losing to Vorapin. He was practically out on his feet two or three times. If you look at his face after the fight you wouldn't thought he won. The guy ran, hit and held. I beat him and I wasn't even acclimated," said Carbajal.

Now fighting at 122, Carbajal feels stronger than ever and according to his chief second, Vincent Parra, who helps train Carbajal along with his father, "Bumpy" Parra, he's looking unbeatable. "He is in 110% percent condition. He's the best that he could possibly be right now. He punches so hard that sometimes he has to spar with Super featherweights. I really think that Cruz is going to make some noise," said Parra who was a former professional fighter himself.

"The only person that can beat me from now on is me," said Carbajal. "I've got good training conditions and a good manager so there won't be any excuses. I'm hungrier than ever. All the Super bantamweight champs like Ponce De Leon better beware. I'm back and ready to take

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your title.”

Carbajal will be continuing his comeback against Trinidad Mendoza (25-12, 16 KO's) at the Golden Hall in Downtown San Diego where he'll be fighting under the Bobby D Presents banner. Hard-hitting heavyweight Mika "The Samoan Destroyer" Gergen and lightweight Rafael Ramirez will also see action. For more info on the card go to [www.boxingsd.com](http://www.boxingsd.com) or call 619-420-8866.