

Vic Darchinyan: A Permanent Resident of Flyweight Purgatory?

Written by Evan Korn

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Last Saturday evening, when all eyes were on Nikolay Valuev's American debut, IBF Flyweight champion Vic Darchinyan slid underneath the radar on the co-feature of the Joel Casamayor-Diego Corrales rubber match, defeating Glenn Donaire via sixth round technical decision.

Since his breakthrough performance against Irene Pacheco nearly two years ago, that's the way it has been. But as mainstream notoriety eludes Darchinyan, he just keeps racking up wins.

As an undefeated titleholder in a weight class stockpiled with puny prodigies, (Pongsaklek Wongjongkam, Lorenzo Parra and Omar Narvaez, to name a few) Darchinyan, after three consecutive knockout wins on Showtime, has emerged as a cult favorite within hardcore boxing circles.

But being a cult favorite is a mixed blessing: it means you have fans... just not too many.

In a division where big money fights are scarcer than sunlight in Siberia, Darchinyan needs lucrative, marketable fights in order to move from cult success to box office powerhouse.

The big money fights are easier said than done.

As far as Wongjongkam goes, the longtime Thai champion appears content to defend his version of the Flyweight crown against putrid mandatory challengers in his home country.

Arce, the flamboyant Mexican now campaigning at Super Flyweight, has the powerful promotional backing of Bob Arum and a devoted fan following in Texas. Judging by Arce's last fight, an annihilation of the past-his-prime Hawk Makepula, it doesn't look like he is seeking out the big fights either.

Undefeated Venezuelan titlist Lorenzo Parra, the slick boxer of the bunch, is the type of fighter the relentless, power punching Darchinyan should avoid at all costs. Having never fought in the United States (and only once in Europe), Parra's worldwide marketability is questionable at best.

For Darchinyan, it appears the greenest pastures would be at 115 pounds, where Arce and regional Japanese attractions like Nobuo Nashiro campaign. Still, defeating Nashiro would only make Darchinyan a star in the Land of the Rising Sun.

In this muddled world of the Lilliputians, where regional fighters rule the roost and rarely venture outside their home countries, one thing is clear: Darchinyan just wants to fight.

"I'll knock out anybody," Darchinyan said. "Just put someone in front of me."

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As Darchinyan also mentioned in his post-fight interview with Jim Gray this past Saturday, moving up two weight classes to fight Bantamweight kingpin Rafael Marquez is something he would like to explore. There are two major problems with that proposition: Marquez is considering a move to the Junior Featherweight division, and the managerial idiocy (courtesy of Ignacio Beristain) of Marquez since his devastatingly brilliant knockouts of “Too Sharp” Johnson and Tim Austin has killed whatever momentum he had.

Where does all this leave Darchinyan? The same place he was nearly two years ago before he stepped into the ring with Pacheco... pugilistic purgatory.

And Darchinyan, like many up-and-comers in a marginalized sport, will always have an invitation to the dance on televised cards... there just won't be any sexy dance partners on the other side of the gymnasium. Sure, he can continue defending his sanctioning body trinket while the DJ keeps spinning his record, but in the end, the same “no big fights” song will continue to be spun until Darchinyan loses... or loses his mind.