

Margarito on Clotney, Williams, Cotto

Written by Ralph Gonzalez

Tuesday, 05 December 2006 19:00

Even the most ardent Antonio Margarito fan would agree that his performance against Joshua Clotney wasn't anything that should make Floyd Mayweather Jr. quake in his boots. After "Pretty Boy Floyd" reportedly turned down eight million dollars to face the Tijuana fighter, Margarito was anointed by many as "the most feared man in boxing."

Margarito (34-4, 24 KO's), the WBO Welterweight champion, looked anything but unbeatable against the hardnosed, African fighter who is no pushover in the first place. If you knew Clotney's history, you knew he was extremely durable and resilient in the tradition of the legendary Azumah Nelson who also hails from Accra, Ghana. Margarito had quick praise for his opponent. "He was very tough, he had a great guard. You really have to give this guy a lot of credit. He took some very hard shots," Margarito said. The shots Margarito has been taking in the press as of lately have also been very hard. "There will always be critics. I think that the long layoff had an affect on me, but the bottom line is that Clotney is a strong and durable fighter. My plan was to pressure him all night. I knew I had to keep busy in order to win. In the end, I worked harder and feel that I clearly won the fight."

Margarito's manager, Sergio Diaz, felt his fighter's performance wasn't up to par and also agrees that his opponent had everything to do with it. "Everybody has a bad night. Clotney was a very rough and tough opponent. Everyone expects Tony to blow these guys out but Clotney isn't someone you do that to," Diaz said. Diaz is right. Before Margarito, Clotney's only loss was a disqualification in a fight many thought he was winning against former world champion Carlos Baldomir.

Diaz and Margarito met up with Clotney later in the night. "We ran into Joshua at the hospital. He said that hitting Tony was like hitting a brick wall. He hurt both of his hands. He said he was very close to calling it quits. He's a guy with a lot of courage just like Tony," Diaz said. After reflecting on the bout, Margarito believes he should've done better. "I looked like I was wide and out of distance with my shots. I know I should've blocked more shots. Clotney landed a couple of good shots but my conditioning paid off. I knew he wasn't going to seriously hurt me."

Margarito was there tending to his own injuries, which were disclosed as being a wrist injury on the right hand and a re-injured ankle. TSS scribe David Avila broke the news of Margarito's original ankle injury which he sustained during sparring a few weeks before the Clotney fight. <http://www.thesweetscience.com/boxing-article/4631/boxing-chatter>

Ranked #1 by the WBO, Paul "The Punisher" Williams has been very vocal about wanting to exercise his option to fight Margarito as soon as possible. Margarito is happy to oblige, hoping to put some bad rumors to rest that have been on his mind. Williams has made claims that he was hired to spar with Margarito and then dismissed from camp when "The Punisher" made Margarito look bad. "Those are all lies. I don't understand why he would say that. I can't believe he says that. The fact is that we offered Williams more rounds of sparring and they turned it down," Margarito said. "His trainer said that Paul would only spar four rounds and wouldn't go

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five. Those lies have to stop. We'll settle that in the ring. He's got a big mouth."

According to Margarito, the rumors perpetuated by Williams are unnecessary and disrespectful. Margarito adds: "We hired Williams before the Daniel Santos fight and after that camp he started running his mouth. He said he hurt me and that he dropped and cut me, that my manager had basically told him to leave camp," Margarito said. "But it wasn't like that at all. Why all the talk? Why all the lies? Especially after he's the mandatory fighter and we're going to fight anyway."

WBA Champion Miguel Cotto, who looked so impressive in his fifth round stoppage of Carlos Quintana, is also someone that lurks in the back of Margarito's mind. The Puerto Rican star went up in weight to the Welterweight division and a clash against Margarito is an easy promotion on many levels. Margarito believes that Cotto is definitely in his future. "It was a good fight for Cotto. Quintana didn't show me much in the ring. I knew Cotto was going to win. I'm glad he won. It'll make for an interesting fight between the two of us. What's better than a fight between a Puerto Rican and a Mexican?"

The fight between the two has been tentatively scheduled by their promoters at Top Rank for next June if Cotto gets past Oktay Urkal and Margarito gets by Williams.

Margarito is poised to make 2007 his year. He plans on getting the big fights that have eluded him for years. "2007 will be a great year. I'm going to keep winning and my goal is to unify the title," Margarito said. "All I can say to the boxing public is to keep watching cause I plan to keep on knocking heads off to make that a reality."