7 predictions for 2007

I love predicting outcomes. Whether it's the outcome of a movie or a fight, I get a thrill when I'm right. Any of you who've ever read my newsletter at www.aztecchronicles.com know that my record as a prognosticator is an excellent one. I usually end up with a winning percentage that hovers somewhere in the eighty percent area. In the interest of making the year a more interesting one, I'd like to put forth seven predictions for 2007.

Marco Antonio Barrera vs. Juan Manuel Marquez
A battle between two of Mexico's greatest fighters is set to take place on March 17th in Las Vegas. Marco Antonio Barrera (63-4, 42 KO's) has transformed himself from a boxer/puncher to more of a boxer as his career comes to a close. The boxing lesson he applied to Rocky Juarez is evidence that his skills are still at a master level. Juan Manuel Marquez (46-3, 35 KO's) is a step up from Juarez. Marquez is a brilliant counterpuncher with power and heart. Although some are predicting this fight will be a purely tactical battle, I expect this will turn into a war. The stakes are high for the winner. This one is for the history books. This is for Mexico City bragging rights and Mexican pride. This will also determine who'll possibly get a second shot at Manny Pacquiao. I'm leaning towards a Juan Manuel Marquez victory by a close decision. I feel that Marquez is the less battle-weary of the two and will ultimately dictate the pace of the fight.

Rafael Marquez vs. Israel Vazquez on March 3rd
This is must see TV. Simply put, as a real boxing fan, this is the fight I'm most excited about. This is a confrontation that renders memories of Alfonso Zamora vs. Carlos Zarate and Lupe Pintor vs. Wilfredo Gomez. Any time you have two unforgiving pound for pound fighters in their prime, facing each other, it's a guaranteed crowd-pleaser. This is the toughest fight to pick of all. I'm going with Vazquez (41-3, 30 KO's) to win this by TKO. Marquez (36-3, 32 KO's) can get a little "chinny" as he demonstrated against Tim Austin. Vazquez can crack harder than the former champ out of Cincinnati and is relentless. Expect Vazquez, the WBC Super bantamweight champion, to come forward and eventually catch Marquez, the IBF Bantamweight champion, with clean shots that will down Nacho Beristain's pupil. Currently there is no venue set for the fight. Personally, I feel that the former Arrowhead Pond in Anaheim, California (now the Honda center) would be the perfect location. The Home Depot Center is also a great location but let's remember that it's an outdoor venue. California weather in March is very unpredictable.

Oscar De La Hoya vs. Floyd Mayweather Jr. on May 5th
This is 2007's mega-fight. Expect Charles Barkley, Tiger Woods and Jack Nicholson to be in attendance. But will the fight live up to the hype? I believe that ultimately it will. I also believe that De La Hoya is too big and just as good a technician as Lil' Floyd. De La Hoya wins this via a twelve round Unanimous Decision by a 116-112 margin. Mayweather will have his moments but not enough of them. "The Golden Boy" will end up spanking the "Pretty Boy."

Antonio Margarito vs. Miguel Cotto on June 9, 2007
After watching Miguel Cotto dismantle the very capable Carlos Quintana, it's hard to bet against the Puerto Rican champ in this battle. My theory is that Cotto (28-0, 23 KO's) managed to look spectacular against Quintana because he knew his countryman didn't have the power to hurt him. This won't be the case against the granite-chinned Margarito. Margarito (34-4, 24 KO's) is a hard puncher who will punish Cotto and stop him within ten rounds. Let's remember that Cotto's chin is questionable at 140 lbs. It will definitely be a factor at 147 against the Tijuana native. I know Margarito didn't have a spectacular showing against Joshua Clottey but Cotto has a very different style. One that will agree with Margarito's aggressive nature.

HBO vs. Showtime
What can I say? Showtime stepped up to the plate big time in snatching up Vazquez vs. Marquez. They reportedly put up a million dollars to make the fight a reality. Although HBO still rules cable television boxing, Showtime is making a play for their share of the market. HBO concentrates on putting on popular fighters while Showtime is seemingly more interested in putting on great fights. HBO's access to marquee names will give it a huge advantage over Showtime in the meantime. Ultimately it's going to take more money on the part of Showtime to be able to compete with and overtake HBO. They seem to be on the right track.

Mikkel Kessler vs. Librado Andrade in late March
Mikkel Kessler (38-0, 29 KO's) will finally be taking on Southern California's Librado Andrade for Kessler's WBC Super Middleweight belt. Andrade (24-0, 18 KO's) is a rough and tough fighter who's spent time in the ring with the Dane as a sparring partner. Reports indicate that Andrade had little problems dealing with Kessler's offense which consists of predictable one and twos. Expect Andrade to gobble up Kessler in eight rounds or less. Notice how I resisted the temptation to call Kessler a "Danish pastry."

Boxing vs. MMA
Guess what folks? As exciting as MMA can be, you can still expect boxing to have its place. Don't get me wrong. I love watching Chuck Liddell, Diego Sanchez, Fedor, Crocop, Wanderlei Silva and Dan Henderson ply their trade. But I find that boxing is a sport that requires more artistry and is more aesthetically pleasing to watch. After attending several M.M.A. events, I've come to the conclusion that a boxing event is bound to be more entertaining overall. M.M.A. will not choke out boxing this year. There are plenty of huge and exciting fights coming in 2007 as outlined above. Boxing will co-exist with M.M.A. M.M.A.'s popularity will slip but it will ultimately thrive due to brilliant marketing efforts by people like Dana White who runs the Ultimate Fighting Championship.

Disagree? Email and let me know.