

Sergio Mora On Middleweight Aftermath

Written by David A. Avila
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It was a night full of middleweights as world champion Jermain Taylor defended his titles and two contenders battled for legitimacy. Meanwhile Southern California's Sergio "The Latin Snake" Mora sat by a television studying the action.

Mora was supposed to be Taylor's opponent but last-minute shenanigans that are common in the sport convinced the East Los Angeles middleweight to turn his back on more than \$1 million and a shot at the world championship.

"Money isn't everything," said Mora, winner of the first Contender reality television show and ranked middleweight. "I want a chance to win the title not just fight for it."

Mora says the middleweight division was bashed wide open by Kelly Pavlik who demolished Colombia's feared Edison Miranda last Saturday. The champion Taylor took another step backward in his split-decision win over Cory Spinks.

"There was a slugfest and a bore fest," said Mora. "I wasn't surprised that Kelly Pavlik won. Miranda was over-rated all along. Kelly is the better technician and he's really strong."

Mora and many others feel Pavlik's victory now sends a message to Taylor's promoters and to HBO the cable television network: there are plenty of good middleweights without looking for welterweights and junior middleweights to fight for the middleweight world title.

"To tell you the truth, I felt Cory Spinks should have won the fight. He out-boxed Taylor and he controlled the fight," Mora said about the decision that went to Taylor who kept his titles. "But boxing is subjective. It's all about what you like more: boxing and moving or aggression."

Bob Arum, president of Top Rank, proclaimed before the contest that his fighter Pavlik could be the next Oscar De La Hoya.

"He's two fights away from being the biggest attraction in boxing," said Arum by telephone.

Make that one fight away Mr. Arum.

Pavlik stormed through the first three rounds with an aggressive attack that seemed to surprise Miranda who's usually chasing his opponents. Not this time. After tasting serious power from the Ohioan's punches, Miranda began moving backward to avoid the pummeling.

"That was my idea all along to make him go backward," said Pavlik. "He can't fight going backwards."

When both fighters exchanged furiously in the first round, it was apparent that Pavlik had the better blocking and punching technique.

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Mora, who knows Pavlik and Taylor from amateur competitions, said that among boxers it was obvious that Pavlik had more readily boxing tools than Miranda.

“Pavlik is not real fast and he gets hit a lot, but he throws so many punches,” said Mora who feels the number one contender has a real shot to win the world title. “He hits hard and he knows what he’s doing.”

Missed opportunity

Mora said he isn’t upset about refusing to fight Taylor in Memphis though he’s been criticized in the boxing world for turning his back on the offer.

“I have a lot of pride. I want to stay undefeated,” said Mora. “I know I can beat Jermain Taylor and I want a chance to do it. But I’m not going to win in Memphis. It’s his hometown area.”

So prideful is Mora that when he heard Taylor’s promoter Lou DiBella call him a coward during a press conference, it rankled him.

“I saw DiBella at the MGM Grand during the De La Hoya-Mayweather fight. He was talking to some people I know. I tapped him on the shoulder and told him to apologize to me for calling me a coward,” said Mora. “He smiled and told me some things. But I told him I wanted him to apologize to me for calling me a coward. Finally he did.”

Mora said he realizes that promoters and fighters say things to hype a fight but refuses to allow someone call him a coward.

“I’ll fight anybody in the ring,” Mora says.

Another fighter willing to accept any challenge is Taylor. But his performance against Spinks left the boxing world wondering if he can still perform at the elite level.

“I felt he lost to Bernard Hopkins twice but the judges gave him the decisions. I thought he lost to Winky Wright but the judges gave him the decision. He beat a little guy in Kassim Ouma and now he barely beat another little guy in Cory Spinks. What’s next for Jermain? Manny Pacquiao?” said Rick Smith a writer for a boxing magazine based in Los Angeles. “People forget that Zab Judah knocked out Spinks. Judah’s a little guy.”

When the match was announced a month ago, many including Arum felt that Taylor’s proposed title defense against the much smaller Spinks was embarrassing to the sport.

It was supposed to be Mora in the ring.

“We were supposed to fight in San Francisco, in Las Vegas then they finally said Miami,” Mora said about the proposed fight with Taylor. “I didn’t want to fight in Miami but I said ok. Then a few days before the formal announcement they say the fights going to be in Memphis. I think that was the plan all along.”

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The East Los Angeles fighter is set to fight in July probably against middleweight contender Raymond Joval. A site hasn't been set but the Galen Center at USC remains a strong possibility.

Mora paused a moment as he thought about his future possibilities. With Pavlik's big win and Taylor's small win, the gateway to the middleweight title looks inviting.

"Who knows what's going to happen bro. But I could be fighting Jermain Taylor in September," Mora said. "If it's not in Memphis, I'll take it."

Fights on television

Wednesday ESPN2, 7 p.m., Chevelle Hallback (25-4-1) vs. Holly Holm (17-1-2).

Friday, ESPN2, 6 p.m., Lamont Peterson (20-0) vs. Dorin Spivey (34-5).

Friday, Telefutera, 8 p.m., Jesus Karass-Soto (16-3-2) vs. Gilbert Venegas (10-4-2).