Written by Ralph Gonzalez
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Antonio Margarito is a genuine crowd pleaser. Maybe he doesn't have the most fluid style or the best technique. But you can't ever accuse "The Tijuana Tornado" of being boring. The fact that he mostly uses his offense as a defense always makes for intriguing confrontations. Margarito, the WBO welterweight champion, is preparing to defend his title against Paul "The Punisher" Williams on July 14th at the Home Depot Center in Carson, California.

While he normally makes it a practice to respect his opponents, he doesn't understand all the hype behind Williams.

"I've fought much better fighters than Paul Williams. He's never beaten anyone. I don't know how he got a number one ranking," said Margarito (34-4, 24 KOs). "I think he made his name by mentioning me every chance he got. Now that the fight is signed he hasn't said anything. I think a little bit of fear has crept into his mind." Williams brings an unmarked 32-0, 24 KO record to the table.

Once slated to fight Floyd Mayweather Jr. and then turned down by the so called "pound for pound king", Margarito considers 'Li'l Floyd's' performance against Oscar De La Hoya on Cinco de Mayo unimpressive.

"What fight? That wasn't a fight. Everyone was waiting for a fight to break out. Oscar said he was going to be aggressive and he wasn't," continued Margarito. "He didn't use his jab. It was a big disappointment. The audience expected much better than what they got."

According to Margarito, talk of a Mayweather/De La Hoya rematch is unwarranted.

"No way should there be a rematch. If it was a war like Barrera versus Marquez or Barrera versus Morales then I'd understand. Those are real fights," said the 29-year-old fighter. "I would never defraud my fans. I'm a fighter who always gives everything in the ring. I come to fight every single time out."

It's no secret that Mayweather Jr. turned down an eight million dollar offer to fight Margarito.

"I don't consider Floyd Mayweather the pound for pound champion because he didn't want to fight me when the fight was offered to him," said Margarito.

He readily admits that his hard fought victory over rugged Josh Clottey was his most challenging.

"My most difficult fight was against Clottey. He's an incredibly strong fighter that took everything I handed out. Every time I hit him it was like hitting a wall," said Margarito. "I had some things happen before the fight. I injured my ankle and my hand. But I don't want to use those as excuses. He's a very good fighter." Margarito won in convincing fashion with scores of 116-112

(twice) and a less believable 118-109.

Although well focused on the lanky power puncher that is the 6' 1" Williams, he knows a victory will open doors to the mega fights he's always desired. "I'm only thinking about Paul Williams at this moment. I know that if I win, I fight Miguel Cotto next," said Margarito. "After that, all the so called pound for pound best fighters like Mayweather won't be able to avoid me. For now it's all about Williams."

"The Tijuana Tornado" vs. "The Punisher"? It almost sounds like a W.W.E. match, or maybe more of a W.W.F match. Whatever the case may be, don't expect any scripted material or phony blood to be spilled. Margarito and Williams are two of the truest warriors in the game and are both looking to score a brutal knockout.

"I don't think this fight will go the distance. I doubt it," said Margarito. "This is going to be a real fight. It may not get as many viewers as De La Hoya/Mayweather but I guarantee it'll be a fight between two warriors willing to risk it all."

And ultimately, that will make all the difference in the world.

SPEEDBAG Ring announcer Joe Martinez has signed an exclusive two year deal with the mixed martial arts company W.E.C. (World Extreme Cagefighting).

"The contract puts me in Las Vegas once a month at the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino," Martinez said. "I think it'll be a big break since I'm getting an opportunity to grow with the Mixed Martial Arts industry."

Martinez, who hails out of Barstow, California was the ring announcer for the Fox network televised reality series "The Next Great Champ" and is a regular fixture on many of the boxing shows promoted in the Southern California area.

Unfortunately, even with the backing of boxing icon Oscar De La Hoya, "T.N.G.C." had luke-warm ratings and made a quick disappearance off the network's prime time slot.

"I was pretty excited about the show but I also had a feeling that the product wasn't up to par and in a way it hurt boxing and set my career back," said Martinez.

Martinez has been announcing for seven years and has been slowly rising in the ranks currently occupied by the likes of Michael Buffer, Jimmy Lennon and Lupe Contreras.

His booming and elegant voice has encouraged some of his fans to bestow him the tag of "The Latin Michael Buffer".

"I take it as a compliment," said the 32 year old, who counts the Morongo Casino as one of his regular gigs. "Michael Buffer took announcing to another level and you have to admire that."

The W.E.C. fight will be televised on the VERSUS network.

To get more information on Joe Martinez and his upcoming dates, visit his website: www.joeamartinez.com