

## Alfonso Gomez The Renaissance Fighter

Written by David A. Avila  
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Three major welterweight confrontations take place on Saturday on both sides of the country, but nary a word is whispered about Alfonso Gomez.

Underestimating the former participant of the television reality show the Contender seems to be a national pastime.

It's one of the obstacles Gomez faces regularly and intends to change on Saturday at the Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City when he faces former world champion Arturo "Thunder" Gatti (40-8, 31 KOs) in a 10-round fight. The match is one of three that will be televised on HBO.

Gomez is what you might call a Renaissance man though few that meet him see anything else but a boxing pug.

"People always tell me I'm not the person they thought I was," says Gomez, 26, who lives in Whittier but was born in Guadalajara, Mexico. "They always say I'm a lot different from the person they see on television."

From his first appearance on the reality show Gomez's humbleness but quiet confidence attracted fans in droves and he quickly became the fan favorite among all of the boxers, especially after surprising Peter Manfredo Jr. in the first fight of the show. It was a shocker.

"I was watching Peter closely. I knew he was dieting to make weight," said Gomez (16-3-2, 7 KOs) about his now famous first meeting against Manfredo. "Everybody told me he was the strongest, don't fight him. I thought to myself I'll either be a hero or the idiot."

The rest is television and boxing history as Gomez proceeded to win and gain a foothold on the show. Though he didn't win the television championship, he without a doubt became its most popular figure.

"I love Alfonso Gomez," said Mary Williams, an usher at a Southern California baseball stadium. "Me and my husband watched the show every week. Alfonso Gomez was our favorite. He's such a nice young man."

That's a persona Gomez developed from the show. But inside the boxing ring he's a no-nonsense marauder who pressures opponents into mistakes and obliterates them with his own willpower.

"Nobody has more heart than Alfonso," said Sergio Mora, who captured the first Contender championship.

When Diego Corrales (may he rest in peace) needed fighters to emulate Jose Luis Castillo's pressure style in their first fight, he called Gomez to work as a sparring partner.

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Against Britain's muscular Martin Concepcion, as soon as he saw that fighter stumble, Gomez moved in for the kill like an assassin who quickly served the finishing blow.

Outside the ring the Whittier resident has many passions and most of them pertain to the theater or movie industry.

Did you know Gomez has acted in several plays and written two screenplays? Or did you imagine that his true love is not punching guys in the face (though he loves boxing) but becoming an actor?

"I have more skills in acting than boxing," claims Gomez, who wants to wait until his boxing career is over before pursuing his real life goal. "You can't serve two masters."

Gomez, who is managed by Gary Gittelsohn, was recently chosen to use his comfort skills in front of a camera overseas. Bet you didn't know that?

"I went to Thailand to do their version of the Contender," Gomez said. "I do what Sugar Ray Leonard did on our Contender."

When the Thai television producers and other personnel spent time with the Mexican-American icon, they were quickly surprised by his multi-faceted people skills.

"They told me you're nothing like the guy in the Contender," Gomez said. "I know I can act."

On Saturday, there's no acting allowed unless it's simulating Rocky Marciano's fight against Archie Moore.

"I grew up watching Gatti. I'm a big fan of his," Gomez says of his opponent. "I really want an exciting fight."

Gomez reasons that's why the Gatti promoters chose him. He provides excitement.

"Not too long ago he was a world champion," he says of Gatti. "If I win I'm going to be closer to my goal of being a world champion."

### **Cintron vs. Matthyse**

IBF welterweight titleholder Kermit "The Killer" Cintron (27-1, 25 KOs) defends his title against Argentina's Walter Matthyse (26-1, 25 KOs) on the main event of the Boardwalk Hall fight card.

Cintron has beaten several top-notch opponents since losing by technical knockout to Antonio Margarito two years ago. He faces hard-hitting but rather crude Matthyse who lost by technical knockout to Paul Williams last year. It's one of three welterweight fights that HBO will televise.

Donaire captures IBF flyweight title

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A left hook by Nonito Donaire knocked out Armenia's Vic Darchinyan 38 seconds into the fifth round last Saturday in Bridgeport, Conn. for the IBF flyweight world title.

Darchinyan had stopped six of seven opponents in title defenses. The lone survivor was Donaire's older brother Glenn who could not continue due to an injury.

The taller Nonito Donaire used his speed and timing to offset Darchinyan's bull-like charges. It wasn't a shock that he beat Darchinyan, but how he beat him.

Darchinyan, a roughhouse kind of fighter, had been steamrolling smaller opponents. For the first time he was actually fighting someone his same size who had speed and power. Those wide punches by Darchinyan were exploited by Donaire from the opening bell.

The tough Armenian only won a single round in my book up to the fifth round. And that was a close round to score.

Fight fans in the West Coast were not surprised. Donaire has shown good quickness and better defensive skills in the last two years fighting in Hollywood, Montebello and Temecula.

Now he can get paid with possible fights against the junior bantamweights champions and contenders Cristian Mijares, Martin Castillo, Jose Navarro and Jorge Arce. Donaire can go back to 115 pounds and still do well in the ring and even better with the purses.

Hopefully Darchinyan can recover and get back in the hunt. He's an exciting fighter.

### **Joachim Alcine Wins WBA junior middleweight title**

Canada's Joachim Alcine managed to punch through the octopus defense of former WBA champ Travis Simms who seldom punched without grappling throughout the 12 round bout.

The judges had it right in giving Alcine a unanimous decision and the Showtime crew had it wrong in giving Simms the nod.

How can you reward a fighter who is solely intent on holding?

Simms held from round one until the 11th round. Alcine let it go for about six rounds then began to hit at anything despite the constant holding. It wasn't the native Haitian's fault that the contest was a bore.

Another culprit for the boring fight was referee Mike Ortega who failed to enforce the rules. According to the boxing rules holding is not allowed. So why did Ortega allow Simms to continue holding for 11 rounds?

The small crowd booed the entire fight. Alcine did his part to make a fight of the match and was rewarded for his effort. Showtime's Al Bernstein better watch the tape again. He had it drastically wrong.

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Simms was classy after the fight. He definitely deserves another shot at the title. He just has to forget about the boa constrictor moves. This is boxing not MMA.

### Fights on television

Wed. ESPN2, 8 p.m., Joel Julio (31-1) vs. Cornelius Bundrage (26-2).

Fri. ESPN2, 8 p.m., Allan Green (23-1) vs. Darrell Woods (26-10).

Fri. Telefutura, 8 p.m., Francisco Lorenzo (28-4) vs. Baudel Cardenas (17-9-2).

Sat. HBO, 6 p.m., Antonio Margarito (34-4) vs. Paul Williams (32-0);

Kermit Cintron (27-1) vs. Walter Matthysse (26-1);

Arturo Gatti (40-8) vs. Alfonso Gomez (16-3-2).

Sat. pay-per-view 6 p.m., Roy Jones Jr. (50-4) vs. Anthony Hanshaw (21-0-1).