

Can Vazquez Pull Off A “Chiquita” Gonzalez?

Written by Ralph Gonzalez
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The year was 1993 and Junior Flyweight Champion Humberto “Chiquita” Gonzalez signed to fight Michael Carbajal in a title unification bout that garnered “fight of the year” honors. It was a brutal back and forth affair that saw Carbajal get dropped twice before “Little hands of stone” stopped Gonzalez in the seventh round. “Chiquita” Gonzalez would go on to win the rematch and the rubber match in hotly contested decisions.

Israel “Magnifico” Vazquez (41-4, 30 KO’s) who like “Chiquita” Gonzalez, hails from Mexico City, finds himself in a similar situation. He’s set to fight Rafael Marquez (37-3, 33 KO’s) who took his WBC Super Bantamweight belt earlier this year with a seventh round stoppage in an early fight of the year candidate.

It was a hard fought battle with Vazquez dropping the former IBF Bantamweight champion in the third round. Marquez regained control but it seemed that Vazquez was about to turn the tide like he did against the highly regarded WBO bantamweight champion Jhonny Gonzalez. Vazquez stopped Gonzalez in the tenth round after being dropped twice.

Vazquez’s nose was so battered by Marquez’s lefts, that by the second round he could only breathe through his mouth. “I hated to call it a night after the seventh round but fighting someone like Rafael Marquez requires you to have all your faculties,” Vazquez said. “It would’ve been like fighting with one arm. It just didn’t make sense to continue. That’s what rematches are for. To tie up any loose endings. To clear up any doubts or misconceptions.”

After nasal surgery to remove the blockages that restrained his breathing, Vazquez feels good to go. “I’m ready. I prepared very hard because Marquez is someone we have deep respect for and he merits our best,” Vazquez said. “Marquez is a dangerous guy that can take you out with one punch. That’s the kind of opponent we trained for.”

Most fans and media would agree with Vazquez that pound for pound, Rafael Marquez is the hardest puncher in boxing. “He’s definitely the hardest hitter I’ve faced at this point of my career,” said Vazquez whose sparring partners have included Junior Featherweight sensation Manny Pacquiao. “We made sure to work on our defense. I’m still going to be extremely aggressive but I won’t be getting hit as much.”

In charge of fortifying Vazquez’s defense is new trainer Rudy Perez.

Perez is mostly known for his work with future hall of famer Marco Antonio Barrera. Vazquez went through a merry go round of trainers which included Freddie Roach, Justine Fortune, Joe Goossen and finally Perez.

“Rudy Perez is a great trainer and a great person. I’ve learned a lot from him,” Vazquez said. “Of course it’s different than working with Freddie Roach who I was with for so long but it’s always good to see a different approach.”

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Perez will be matching wits against Marquez’s trainer Ignacio “Nacho” Beristain. Beristain is a hall of famer and top notch trainer of some of Mexico’s greatest champions. He was also “Chiquita” Gonzalez’s trainer.

“I believe that Israel knows Rafael’s weak points and he understands what he has to do to win the rematch. Rudy Perez is an excellent addition to our team and I think he’s got a great game plan in mind,” stated Vazquez’s manager Frank Espinoza. “This will be another tremendous war. Another classic people will talk about for years to come. I’m beginning to feel some nervous excitement.”

Vazquez knows that Marquez is the betting favorite but isn’t fazed one bit.

“Nobody gave me a chance in boxing when I first started. This isn’t the first time people have doubted me,” Vazquez said. “I’ve been proving them wrong all through out my career. I’ll prove them wrong again. I’ll defeat Marquez.”

“Chiquita” Gonzalez would be proud.

The rematch will be televised from Hidalgo, Texas by Showtime Championship Boxing and promoted by Sycuan Ringside, Golden Boy Promotions and Gary Shaw.

For more on Israel Vazquez go to www.espinozaboxingclub.com