

Vicente Escobedo Back In Los Angeles

Written by David A. Avila
Tuesday, 29 April 2008 19:00

Imitation is flattery and for more than a decade more than a few copied every move of high-flying Michael Jordan including his tongue wagging and the gait of his walk.

Boxing has that too.

Nowadays people want to be like a particular boxer known as the Golden Boy.

And why not?

With money coming out of his ears and power at his fingertips it's no wonder a new generation of prizefighter looks at the Mexican-American as a model to emulate.

Vicente Escobedo hopes to be the next generation Oscar De La Hoya and with assistance from his promoter he's taking another step on Friday May 2, at the Home Depot Center against Argentina's Roberto Arrieta (27-12-4, 10 KOs). The fight will be televised by Telefutera.

Ever since his first pro fight the comparisons to his boss have spilled out. From the delivery of his left hook to the body build, Escobedo is often compared to De La Hoya.

"I get that a lot," Escobedo (16-1, 11 KOs) says about comparisons to De La Hoya.

After competing in the 2004 Olympics held in Greece, Escobedo was plucked by Golden Boy Promotions and is seen as a future world champion. But, first things first.

In the beginning the comparisons seemed uncanny. That left hook, the jab, even his mild-mannered personality matched De La Hoya, but a loss to Puerto Rico's Daniel Jimenez two years ago, set him back a spell. Now he's attempting to recover that groove he had before.

Not wanting to let just anyone tinker with a Rolex kind of fighter, they called a master craftsman in Mexico City's Nacho Beristain. He had two Rolex kind of fighters in Rafael and Juan Manuel Marquez as proof of his expertise.

"This will be my fourth fight with Nacho Beristain," says Escobedo, 26. "I'm going back to the old Vicente."

Before the loss to Jimenez, the fighter known as "Chente" was a lightning quick junior lightweight who could out-think and out-fight opponents. The disparity in talent was always obvious.

But doubt began to seep in his mind. That's where Beristain has stepped into mold him into a focused and non-stop fighting machine.

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"I really think you're going to see that fighter against this opponent from Argentina," said Escobedo who calls Arrieta a strong durable veteran. "I'm going to be too fast and my boxing skills are going to be the difference."

Back in January, Escobedo beat Pascali Adorno after 10 rounds at the Morongo Casino. It was a decisive victory and a firm step on claiming the old confidence.

"We do have a plan but right now, we're getting adapted to me just working little by little with this new system," said Escobedo who trained entirely in Mexico City for the fourth consecutive fight. "I used to go through these opponents."

Fighting for Golden Boy Promotions makes it easy for Escobedo to remember what he's shooting for in his own career. Especially when the comparisons to De La Hoya are made.

"It's a lot of pressure but it motivates me because some people believe that," he said. "Just hearing that makes me train harder. It's the price I've got to pay to accomplish my dreams."

Maybe someday soon we'll see tongue wagging from Escobedo too.

West-East Heavyweight showdown

Riverside's Chris "The Nightmare" Arreola will be fighting New Jersey's Chazz Witherspoon (23-0, 15 KOs) at the Theater in Madison Square Garden in New York City on June 21. It will be televised on HBO Boxing After Dark series.

Both fighters are undefeated with Arreola facing the stiffer competition and knocking out 21 of 23 opponents.

Arreola, 27, has faced several prominent heavyweights. His last seven opponents had a combined record of 126 wins and 27 losses.

Witherspoon, who turns 27 in September, beat his last seven opponents with a combined record of 116 wins and 59 losses.

It's an intriguing fight that pits two young American heavyweights on the rise and ready to crack the top 10 and possibly meet one of the three champions holding the world title belt.

"It's a good fight for Chris," said Henry Ramirez, who trains Arreola. "We've got a good shot at beating Witherspoon. But he's a good fighter so we have to really prepare."

Sons of Julio Cesar Chavez

Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. and Omar Chavez, the sons of the great Mexican fighter both won on Saturday at Queretaro, Mexico.

The older son, Julio, scored a ninth round knockout over Italy's Giuseppe Loriga in a 10-round

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junior middleweight bout. Omar Chavez won a four round decision over Marco Nazareth of Puerto Vallarta, Mexico in a junior welterweight contest.

Also on the card was Hector Camacho Jr. who beat Kenny Kost in a junior middleweight fight.

It seems logical that Julio Cesar Chavez and Hector Camacho Jr. will do a second generation of the fight that took place in Las Vegas between their fathers back in 1992. Chavez dominated in that fight. Can Camacho Jr. avenge his father's loss?

We'll see.

Kaliesha West bout canceled

Moreno Valley's undefeated bantamweight contender Kaliesha West was scheduled to fight former world champion flyweight Maribel Zurita in Dallas, Texas this past Saturday, but the contest was scratched.

At first there were problems with the Texas Athletic Commission due to a medical record mix up.

Apparently the records requested by the Commission did not arrive on time but after repeated phone calls the mix up was finally cleared.

The promoters are first-time boxing organizers.

West was eager to fight Zurita, maybe too eager. The promoters asked her to pay for her own flight to Texas, and then, to accept the fight for no pay. The West family declined.

Female fighters are often at the mercy of promoters who know that women have a difficult time finding a place to show their skills.

West, who trains daily, also works full-time at a hospital in San Bernardino County. She was saddened by the cancellation.

Boxing Writers Dinner in L.A.

For the first time in 83 years the Boxing Writers Association of America will hold their annual dinner in the city of Los Angeles on Thursday May 1. The event will be held at the Biltmore Hotel in downtown L.A. and will honor numerous professional fighters including Fighter of the Year nominee Floyd Mayweather Jr.

Tickets are still available for the event that begins at 6:30 p.m. For information call (212) 969-0401 or (917) 312-6418.

All but one of the previous dinners were held in the East Coast. Also being honored is Cameron Dunkin as Manager of the Year and Enzo Calzaghe as Trainer of the Year.

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Dirrell vs. Hanshaw

Two hot super middleweight contenders meet on Friday when undefeated Andre Dirrell (14-0, 9 KOs) meets Anthony Hanshaw (21-1-1, 14 KOs) at Chumash Casino. The fight will be televised by Showtime. Hanshaw's only loss came to Roy Jones Jr. a year ago.

Former Bantam Champ Back At Morongo

Mexico's Jhonny Gonzalez (37-6, 31 KOs), the former bantamweight world champion, returns to the Morongo Casino to face another former world champion, Mauricio Pastrana (34-8-2, 22 KOs), in a junior featherweight bout on May 9. Gonzalez won his last bout that took place at Morongo by impressive knockout over Edel Ruiz. For tickets and information (800) 252-4499.

Desert Storm vs. The Hitter

Palm Springs boxer Timothy "Desert Storm" Bradley (21-0, 11 KOs) is gearing up for his world title match against WBC world titleholder Junior "The Hitter" Witter (36-1-2, 21 KOs) of England. The bout takes place on May 10 at Nottingham, England. Bradley is rated the number one junior welterweight by the WBC. Witter's only loss came against Zab Judah in 2000.

Fights on television

Fri. Telefutura, 8 p.m., Vicente Escobedo (16-1) vs. Roberto Arrieta (27-12-4).

Fri. Showtime, 11 p.m., Andre Dirrell (14-0) vs. Anthony Hanshaw (21-1-1).

Sat. HBO, 7 p.m., Oscar De La Hoya (38-5) vs. Steve Forbes (33-5).