

Quintana All Steak, Not So Much Sizzle

Written by Ron Borges

Wednesday, 04 June 2008 19:00

Carlos Quintana isn't managed by Rodney Dangerfield but maybe he should be. What else would explain why the reigning WBO welterweight champion is so disrespected he's an underdog to a challenger he just spanked four months ago?

Quintana is one of those fighters few people understand. He is not great at anything but he's good at many things and that, in this day and age, makes him a problem for anybody. Well, nearly anybody, which is probably why he remains in the shadows in the opinion of many.

Like 31 other guys, Quintana had no answers the night he fought Miguel Cotto two years ago for the then vacant WBA welterweight title. He was stopped in five uncompetitive rounds, retiring on his stool despite the pleadings of his corner men. To some that meant he was less than a fighter, but to more astute observers all it meant was he became one of 32 guys who couldn't hang with Miguel Cotto and one of 26 who couldn't even hang around for a full work shift with the undefeated welterweight champion.

Frankly, so what?

Other than that one night, Quintana's record is unblemished. He is 25-1, has stopped 19 opponents, thoroughly outboxed and outfoxed Williams, the lanky, 6-foot-1 southpaw with the outrageous 82-inch reach, in February to snatch the WBO title from him. And a year earlier he completely exposed the flaws of a hot prospect named Joel Julio, who many in boxing were touting as a young man nearly ready to challenge Cotto.

Despite all that he has accomplished however, Carlos Quintana remains a guy people look at and scratch their heads. They look but they do not see, believing that competence is not enough. They look for sizzle instead of the steak, which is becoming all too familiar in the sporting world these days.

"Feb. 9 was a stunner," insists Williams' promoter, Dan Goossen. "It just shows me how crazy this business is. No one gave Quintana a chance and he pulled out a major upset."

At that point Goossen began talking about Williams' reported problems making weight and his apparent listlessness born not from anything Quintana did but from his disappointment when he learned a unification fight with then IBF champion Kermit Cintron had to be cancelled because of injury and this guy Quintana – who? – would be replacing him.

Ask Williams, who many were touting as another difficult challenge for Cotto before Quintana stepped in front of him because of his obvious size advantages in height and reach, and he talks little about the man who upset him and quite a lot about rhythm.

He talks on and on about it, sounding more like a professor at the Julliard School of Music than a professor of pugilism. He talks of how he had no rhythm that night until he sounds like a

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sad-eyed blues man who lost his musical measure.

“I just didn’t get in my rhythm last time,” Williams said recently when asked why Quintana dominated him so thoroughly with sneaky left hands and a stinging right jab that couldn’t miss that by the end of the fight both his eyes were cut, his nose was bloody and his right eye was closing. “I couldn’t get in my rhythm. He knows it, too.

“It prevented me from doing everything how I normally fight. I just couldn’t get my rhythm. I just don’t know what it was. I couldn’t do it like I could before. Yeah, I wasn’t in my rhythm.”

Apparently, if Paul Williams had just had the right music in his head on Feb. 9, there would be no need to fight Carlos Quintana Saturday night on SHOWTIME. If you believe his story, just pack the right CDs and there’s no problem impressing the crowd at the Mohegan Sun Events Center. Don’t leave his iPod back in the room and it’s an easy win. Hell, borrow an out of date Walkman and he waltzes home a champion. Who is this guy he’s fighting again?

That seems to be the consensus of many people in boxing who should know better. Is Carlos Quintana a great fighter? No, but he’s a very competent one and these days that can take a man a long way.

Four fights ago it took him to a one-sided win over the hottest young prospect in the division, then undefeated Joel Julio. Eighteen months later, it won him the WBO welterweight title from Williams, who was a step behind and, more to the point, a fist to the face behind all night long. Did anyone notice or was there a news blackout of every fight this guy has fought save the night he quit on his stool against Miguel Cotto?

“I think people saw the terrific ability of Quintana and the strategy and toughness of Quintana and, frankly, the best of Quintana when he beat Williams,” says his promoter Lou DiBella. “But Williams has a big win over Antonio Margarito and was a terrific champion in his own right. He’s one of the tallest and has one of the longest reaches I’ve ever seen in the welterweight division. He’s a very dangerous guy. I expect it to be a terrific fight.

“Whenever you have a good fighter like Williams, he’s going to make some adjustments and will be a better fighter. You’re also going to have a very confident champion in Quintana who beat Williams the first time, feels like he knows him even better and is going to be able to be a better fighter, too.

“I’m interested as a fan, honestly, in whether the weight is going to be an issue for the former champion because it was certainly an issue last time. I want to see if Williams feels comfortable at 147 still. If he’s comfortable at 147, it’s going to be a great, great fight. If he’s not comfortable at 147, he’ll have a real problem.”

So according to Williams, the problem was bad music in his head. No rhythm. According to Quintana’s own promoter, the problem was Williams struggled to make weight. Anybody think Carlos Quintana had something to do with Paul Williams’ problems four months ago?

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Anybody see the way he undressed young Julio on another night when he was supposedly only there to be the B side of the act? Anyone think those fights mean more than a bad night against maybe the best welterweight in the world?

One guy does. The right guy.

“Last time I was a 6-1 underdog and this time I’m the underdog again,” Quintana said. “It doesn’t matter. It can be 20-1 for all I care. I feel the respect people give me is not the respect I deserve. I feel like I have to go out and prove myself again.”

But does he feel he can or was it all just a mirage? Were those 25 nights false positives and the one negative night the real story of who Carlos Quintana is?

When you hear people talk about him, or more to the point about the guy he just beat up four months ago, it sounds that way. But then, the only guy whose opinion really matters in this is the guy saying the least.

“In the last fight I had good defense and I’m going to keep that up,” Quintana promised. “Whatever new tactics he brings, I’ll be able to adjust to them.”

Understated competence. That is Carlos Quintana. Only time and Paul Williams will tell if that’s good enough on June 7 but on the 26 fight nights that have preceded it it has been 25 times. As odds go, that’s a lot better than the bookmakers seem to believe it is.

“People discount Quintana’s credentials because of one loss to Miguel Cotto,” DiBella said. “A lot of terrific fighters have been knocked out by him. That night doesn’t reflect his career.

“He’s a very tough guy, a very cagey guy, a skilled boxer and he’s rough. As Williams saw in the first fight, Quintana is a tough fight for anybody. Williams is going to discover that again.”

If he does maybe then Carlos Quintana will get what that dumpy old comedian Rodney Dangerfield never did. Maybe next fight he can have Aretha Franklin singing him a new entrance anthem.

“R-E-S-P-E-C-T, find out what it means to me.

“R-E-S-P-E-C-T

“Take care, TCB.”

If he socks it to Paul Williams once again, who could deny him at least that measure of respect any longer?