

TSS Where Are They Now: Little Red Lopez

Written by Shawn Murphy
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Recently I spoke with former WBC Featherweight Champion Danny "Little Red" Lopez. Lopez was a real crowd-pleaser and one of the most popular fighters of the 70s. He would often be knocked down, only to storm back to victory. Lopez won the title in 1976 with a unanimous decision over David Kotey, in front of a partisan crowd in Ghana estimated at 120,000. Lopez would defend his crown eight times before running into Salvador Sanchez in 1980. He would also lose the rematch to Sanchez later that year. He retired with a record of 42-6 with 39 KOs. He is a member of the World Boxing Hall of Fame and the California Boxing Hall of Fame.

(SM) Mr. Lopez, I don't see much about your amateur career. When did you start boxing?

(DL) I started at about sixteen. I had a pretty decent amateur career. I think I had forty-eight fights, like seven losses. Went to the Nationals, Golden Glove Nationals a time or two.

(SM) You were 23-0 when you lost to Bobby Chacon. After that loss was there ever a doubt in your mind that you would be a world champion?

(DL) No, not at all. It only made me work harder. Bobby and I fought in the amateurs together in New Orleans, AAU Nationals. I think he won his class, I was in a different weight division at the time.

(SM) How did you deal with going to Ghana in front of 120,000 fans to take on David Kotey for the title?

(DL) I had a few fans, the American Embassy was rooting for me. Thank God I had them! I had food and water shipped in from the United States. It was pretty tough, training in the United States and then going over there. The difference in temperature was like 20 degrees. I would get up and run at six in the morning, and it was already 100 degrees by then.

(SM) After you became the champion what was the best and worst about it?

(DL) I'd say the best was making the bid bucks, making so much more money. The worst was getting my butt whipped by Sanchez. (laughing)

(SM) You defended your title eight times before running into Sanchez. How much did you know about Sanchez coming into the fight?

(DL) All we knew was that he was an up and comer. We didn't take that into consideration that much though. But I trained hard for the fight. He had too much stamina, I wasn't prepared for that.

(SM) Was he the toughest fighter you ever faced?

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(DL) Yea he was probably the toughest fighter. Bobby Chacon gave me problems but Sanchez had to be the best though.

(SM) After that second loss to Sanchez you retired but came back twelve years later for a fight. Why?

(DL) I saw George Foreman have a good comeback, so I decided to try it. I trained myself for about a year. I would go to work and then try and train, tried to do the best I could. I was in good shape for my age, forty, but not for the younger kids out there.

(SM) After you retired from boxing, what have you been up to?

(DL) Since I retired I have pretty much been working for a construction company.

(SM) You're in several Hall of Fames, but not the International Boxing Hall of Fame. Do you think you should be?

(SM) I have asked them to put me in there. They invite me back as a guest. I have asked Ed Brophy to get me in there. Maybe one day.

(SM) Do you still follow boxing these days much?

(DL) I try and keep up on all the major fights, watch it on television and pay per view.

(SM) Any regrets looking back on your career?

(DL) I wish I would have maybe moved up a weight. I was having trouble making weight as a Featherweight towards the end of my career. Other than that not too many regrets.

(SM) In your era there were fighters like Sanchez, Chacon and Olivares. How do you think fighters compare today?

(DL) Pretty much the same I think. Some of the Featherweights today are really good fighters.

(SM) Mr. Lopez, any final words for the fans/readers?

(DL) Not too many words, just that I am alive and well. Tell all my fans out there thank you and I hope they enjoy reading this.

Shawn Murphy has a great respect for boxers, and enjoys checking in with the legends of yesteryear, and sharing his work with like-minded readers. Feel free to check out his favorite organization, www.retiredboxers.com.