

Darchinyan Needs Fans; Three Big Cali Cards

Written by David A. Avila
Thursday, 05 February 2009 19:00

Three heavy hitting fight cards take place in California in the next two days.

First, Vic Darchinyan's been saying that despite holding three world titles the respect has not come forth. He wants it.

Forget respect, what about getting fans?

The pocket destroyer Darchinyan (31-1-1, 25 KOs) has leveled three Mexicans, a Russian and a couple of Filipinos, so why won't more than 3,000 Armenian fans show up when he fights yet another Mexican, Jorge "El Travieso" Arce (51-4-1, 39 KOs) on Saturday at the Honda Center.

According to the latest U.S. Census there are more than 120,000 Armenians living in Glendale, Burbank and North Hollywood. Why are they always dwarfed by the Mexican boxing fans in every big fight?

It's not just because 10 million Mexicans live in Southern California. Even back in the 1960s when the Mexican population was about 200,000 in Southern California, they would pack 17,000 into the Inglewood Forum to see Ruben Olivares, Chu Chu Castillo, Rafael Herrera and even Bobby Chacon.

The Armenian fight fans need to show support for their fighters like Darchinyan and junior middleweight Vanes Martirosyan, who is also on the boxing card.

Darchinyan represents one of the most dynamic and spectacular Armenian prizefighters in many years and still only a meager but strong vocal group arrives to support their countryman.

All that is lacking for Darchinyan is not another knockout win, but 10,000 screaming Armenians to fill the seats at the Honda Center, the Home Depot Center or the MGM Grand.

Arce, who may not pack the same punch as Darchinyan, packs more clout when it comes to supporters. Even though one of his countrymen took the starch out of the gathering Mexican tide of support a few weeks ago.

"What happened to Antonio Margarito?" asked an exasperated Mexicali taxi driver Manuel Otanez last weekend when I was over there. "How did he lose?"

Had Margarito won his bout against Sugar Shane Mosley you can be sure that Mexican fight fans would have caravanned once again up Interstate-5 to see if Arce could repeat another Mexican victory. But not now. After seeing their number one fighter drowned by a storm of blows the gathering tornado is now just a dust twister.

Sports fans are like that, most are front-runners who like a winner.

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Darchinyan is a winner.

Though the super flyweight was knocked out by Nonito “The Filipino Flash” Donaire, he’s reloaded and erased any semblance of timidity.

What most people forget is that boxing is entertainment. Nobody wants to see some tall, athletic speedster dance around the ring flicking jabs and never getting hit in return. If people wanted to see ballet they would buy a ticket to that kind of shindig.

No, boxing fans want to see two fighters exchanging blows with force, fury and finality. If one boxer can evade punches by slipping, ducking and blocking that’s OK as long as he’s not moving around the ring like Mikhail Baryshnikov.

This is boxing, not ballet.

At the moment Darchinyan has not grabbed the American consciousness and needs a little help from his countrymen to attract notice. He needs people watching on Showtime to wonder what all the shouting is about? Frenzy creates more frenzy.

Darchinyan and Martirosyan need more Armenian supporters to come out. Once they capture those fans then all groups will begin to notice. That’s the way it works.

Unless Darchinyan can convince 12,000 of his Armenian countryman to follow him when he defends his IBF, WBA and WBC junior bantamweight world titles against Arce, then he’ll simply be a good fighter without much of a following.

Arce, the challenger, established a strong fan base after taking part in a reality television show in Mexico. Coupled with his two former world title belts, a win by the pugnacious Mexican fighter could spark massive interest from boxing rabid fans of his country.

But it’s all up in the air at the moment.

“I am very excited for this fight,” said Arce during a telephone conference call. “I know this is a fight that will bring back my credibility.”

The credibility of Mexican fighters is at stake especially after Tijuana’s Antonio Margarito was knocked out by Shane Mosley over a week ago. This past weekend, at a fight card in Mexicali, Mexico, boxing fans in that country were still grumbling about their most popular fighter’s devastating loss.

Margarito was on the verge of superstardom when Mosley deflated the Mexican fighter’s fearsome reputation with ease.

Mexican fight fans are known to be the most delirious and rabid fans of the sport in North America. They’ll save their money and make 400-mile treks across the border to see their heroes in action. They just don’t like them to lose.

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Now it's Arce's turn to try and stop Mexican fan's slipping faith in its fighters after Margarito, Marco Antonio Barrera and Oscar De La Hoya have all suffered savage defeats in the last year and a half.

"Is Oscar De La Hoya going to fight?" asked one boxing fan as I was literally crossing the border on foot between Mexicali and Calexico on Sunday morning. "How could he lose?"

Top Rank's Bob Arum knows that Mexican boxing fans are the driving force behind the sport's success.

"While everyone else is talking about MMA, the Mexican fight fan still loves boxing," said Arum.

Yes, Mexican boxing fans love the sport, but they want to cheer for one of their own countrymen. Arce can pull some of those fans back into the fold with a victory.

"My career was taking off, then I lost to (Cristian) Mijares," said Arce recalling the one-sided loss he suffered to a fellow Mexican in April 2007. "People thought I wasn't as good of a boxer as some people thought I was. They thought I was just a singer and a celebrity and an entertainer."

Beating Darchinyan will be a mountainous task.

"All my opponents are Mexicans. They are very popular and very strong," said Darchinyan, who has beaten Mexican boxers Mijares, Luis Maldonado and Victor Burgos. "It doesn't matter if they (opponents) are Mexican or Filipino. I am going to knock out and punish whoever it is."

Lemoore fight card

Middleweight contender Andre Ward brings his revamped and re-polished pro style to the ring once again. No more running and flicking but more standing and punching this Friday at Tachi Palace in Lemoore, California. The bout will be televised on Showtime.

Ward (17-0, 12 KOs) faces Henry "Sugar Poo" Buchanan (17-1, 12 KOs) in a 12 round title defense in the main event and new lightweight divisions signee John Molina (14-0, 12 KOs) doesn't get it easy against Joshua Allotey (15-6, 13 KOs).

Both clashes will not be mere speed bumps but firm tests for both Goossen-Tutor Promotion pugilists.

"I am not a reluctant warrior," said Ward, the former gold medal winner in the 2004 Olympics. "I'm not afraid to fight anybody."

For tickets and information call (559) 924-7751.

Maywood fight card

Mexico's Jesus Soto Karass (22-3-3, 16 KOs) fights Carson Jones (18-6-1, 10 KOs) in a junior

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middleweight main event at the Maywood Activity Center in Maywood, California on Friday. Don't expect his usual trainer Javier Capetillo to be in his corner.

Capetillo, who also trains Margarito, has been suspended by the California State Athletic Commission for irregular hand wraps. The matter is under investigation.

Also on the fight card is Omar Chavez (13-0-1, 10 KOs), the second oldest son of Mexico's great champion Julio Cesar Chavez. The undefeated Chavez will be tested when he fights fellow undefeated Mexican Rodolfo Armenta (6-0, 4 KOs) in a junior welterweight bout.

Riverside's Michael "Lil Warrior" Franco (13-0, 8 KOs) meets Antonio Cochero Diaz (9-9, 6 KOs) in a bantamweight showdown set for six rounds.

For tickets or information call (323) 710-1489 or (323) 200-3476. The doors open at 6 p.m.

Fights on television

Fri. ESPN2, 6:00 p.m., Yusaf Mack (26-2-2) vs. Chris Henry (23-1).

Fri. Showtime, 11 p.m., Andre Ward (17-0) vs. Henry Buchanan (17-1).

Sat. Showtime, 9 p.m., Vic Darchinyan (31-1-1) vs. Jorge Arce (51-4-1).