

One of Us Is Leaving Knocked Out

Written by Ron Borges

Thursday, 05 February 2009 19:00

People in boxing keep saying Jorge Arce has a “puncher’s chance” to defeat unified junior bantamweight champion Vic Darchinyan Saturday night on SHOWTIME. That’s a polite way of saying they don’t give the Mexican bawler much of a chance at all against the Armenian brawler.

Not no chance, which remains too often the case in title fights these days, but the kind of slim chance that springs from two things. First, Arce can punch for a little guy and comes to the arena with the inclination to do nothing else. Second, roughly 18 months ago the boxing world sat stunned as Darchinyan was counted out from a left hook to the chin by Nonito Donaire.

Darchinyan almost immediately labeled it a lucky punch but only after someone woke him up to tell him what happened since he had no recollection of the punch or its aftermath. Perhaps it was but he was still out cold after it landed, which brings us to Arce. The singing cowboy from Mexico has lost only once in the past nine years while knocking out 39 opponents on his way to compiling a 51-4-1 record. He has insulted nearly all of his victims and put out the lights on many of them, a trend that he hopes continues throughout the long walk to a dream fight for anyone who favors the hot action of boxing’s little big men over the plodding inaction of ponderous pugilists who carry more weight but far less firepower or the inclination to use it.

“He thinks he is an intimidator,” Arce said of Darchinyan. “He always tells people what he will do and they get intimidated. I’m not that type of guy. His words won’t affect me. He can talk about what he is going to do to me in the ring but I’m not going to fold. I’m a bigger guy than him. I won’t be intimidated.

“This fight speaks for itself. He’s a great champion and I’m a great champion. I know he’s strong enough that he can knock me out with one punch. I know I can knock him out with one punch. There’s nothing else to add. It’s going to be great.”

Certainly it’s going to be concussive. Darchinyan (31-1-1, 25 KO) unified the title last November with an uber-impressive ninth round stoppage of Cristian Mijares, a fighter many listed among the top 10 pound-for-pound fighters in the world and the only one to beat Arce during his nine-year run of victories. It was a stunningly one-sided beating not simply a case of the powerful Australian transplant from Armenia landing one big shot and going home and that is what made the win so impressive.

Darchinyan not only brawled but boxed, giving Mijares a methodical beat down that was a textbook lesson in how to blend aggression with boxing skills. How will Arce counter what Darchinyan showed that night? No one knows because the feeling is he may have no counter unless he can turn the fight into what most people anticipate it will become – a brawl trapped inside four sets of rope.

In a nutshell, that is what Jorge Arce’s strategy is. It’s the same as it always is. Fight.

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"I fight and people love the way I fight," Arce said. "They want to see fighters fighting not dancing. They want to see blood, I'll give them blood. I love that. If it gets on me I get more motivated and excited. I want the fans to see a lot of blood and a lot of hitting. If I go down, I'm going to get up. I hope he does, too."

Those are not the words of someone who is faint of heart or terribly concerned with what Darchinyan brings to the arena, which for the record is plenty of firepower and plenty of attitude.

Arce is the same way, both when it comes to mouthing off and when it comes to punching you in the mouth. That is one reason everyone in boxing has been hoping to see them meet for over a year now. It finally happened only because an eye injury to junior featherweight champion Israel Vazquez sidelined him, forcing Arce to return to 115 pounds in search of a challenge and a payday.

Now he has both but it figures to come with payback as well for all that each has said about the other. Arce did not back down from the debate nor will be back down from the champion's attack once it is launched at the Honda Center in Anaheim. Jorge Arce will be there waiting, guns loaded, firing until one of them is out of bullets.

"I will knock him out," Arce says flatly when asked which fighter is likely to suffer from fistic lead poisoning by the end of the day. "I don't see this fight going 12 rounds. If he knocks me down once I'm going to get back up. He's in for a long night."

"I know Darchinyan has a big punch but he has to work to knock someone out. He's not a knockout punch artist. He can't knock you out with one punch. It will take him a while."

"If he hits me three times, I'll hit him six. If he hits me five, I'll hit him 10. I hope he doesn't fall early because I want to give him a lot of punches. I know he can take a lot so I hope he's ready for them."

Darchinyan has insisted he's ready for whatever Arce brings and Arce's promoter, Bob Arum, has insisted that whatever Darchinyan brings the two fighters together will bring entertainment and the kind of night not quickly forgotten.

"Everyone that follows boxing has been talking about the main event," Arum said. "It's been brewing for years but, like fine wine, if it aged it's better than if it's just made. This is a fight that has aged. It's ready now and should be a candidate for Fight of the Year."

Certainly it's a candidate for filling up the emergency ward when it's over because both these guys come with one thing in mind. Each wants to damage the other as a way of highlighting his own abilities.

Darchinyan remains peeved he is not on either RING magazine or ESPN's top 10 pound-for-pound lists despite defeating Mijares so handily. Considering that Mijares was on then before the fight he probably has a point.

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As for Arce, he wonders how you can lose once in nearly a decade and still be considered a cut below the top fighters in the junior bantamweight and bantamweight divisions for so long. He intends to make his case by making a hard case like Darchinyan suffer for all he believes he's been denied since losing to Mijares.

"Darchinyan's greatest strength is his mouth," said Arce, who presently holds the interim WBA super flyweight title and is a former WBC junior bantamweight and WBO junior flyweight champion. "He has said things I don't appreciate. I am not intimidated by the devil so why would I be intimidated by him? When we get in the ring I am going to hurt him.

"I'm looking forward to testing him and finding out about his will to win. I know what my will to win is. Saturday we find out about his. People think because I lost to Mijares and he beat Mijares that Darchinyan will automatically win our fight. That's not how it works. Styles make fights. You'll see after I nail him what I am saying."

Puncher's chance? Jorge Arce agrees with that. He just sees it as a lot better chance than most people might think.

"One of us is leaving knocked out," Arce said, smiling the smile of a man who knows what that will be. "I'm leaving with all the belts."