

Licenses Revoked! Antonio Margarito & Trainer

Written by David A. Avila
Monday, 09 February 2009 19:00

VAN NUYS, CA.-Antonio Margarito lost his world title, lost his pound for pound ranking and now he's lost his right to fight professionally in the United States.

Former welterweight world champion Margarito and his trainer Javier Capetillo both had their boxing licenses revoked for one year by the California State Athletic Commission on Tuesday after a five hour long hearing that took place in the State Building.

Blame it all on those wet hand wraps.

Though charges of plaster of Paris were being tossed around the country on Internet sites and blog spots, what it came down to was the simple fact that two knuckle pads inserted in the hand wraps were moistened.

That's it.

But according to the rules of California, wraps or pads cannot be moistened whatsoever, even with pure drinking water. Nada.

So on the night that Margarito lost by ninth round knockout to Sugar Shane Mosley, he also lost his right to fight in the United States because of a strict rule infraction.

One of the knuckle pads in question is being analyzed by the state but had not been returned at the time of the hearing. No matter, moistening a hand wrap with any liquid or water is illegal.

Deputy District Attorney Karen Chappelle accused both Capetillo and Margarito of cheating and tampering with the hand wraps.

It seemed that on Jan. 24, the night of the big welterweight title fight at Staples Center in Los Angeles, Margarito had simply stuck his hands out for his trainer to wrap and was unaware of any illegalities. One hand was already being wrapped when Sugar Shane Mosley's trainer Nazim Richardson walked into Margarito's locker room to inspect the hand wrapping process, as is Team Mosley's right and vice versa.

CSAC inspector Che Guevara was watching the process when Richardson walked in. Also in the locker room were inspectors Mike Bray and David Perida. Immediately Richardson objected to the placing of tape on the hand. He claimed that he was told by chief inspector Dean Lohuis of CSAC that it was not allowed. When Lohuis arrived he informed Richardson it was allowed but that Capetillo had put tape too far down the wrist and made him re-tape it. After it was taped Capetillo was told by Lohuis there was still too much tape down the arm. Finally, Lohuis put his finger to the spot that the tape could not pass and it was finally done properly.

"No liquid of any sort can be on the tape," explained Che Guevara who was inspecting the hand

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wrapping done by Capetillo.

Finally after a short while the right hand was completed.

When the left hand was completed Richardson felt it and objected to the firmness of the wrapping. Lohuis also felt it and took it a knuckle pad. Richardson felt the other hand and wanted that hand unwrapped too. There was some discussion that it had already been inspected and didn't need to be unwrapped, but Guevara said he had not inspected the hand wrap and never inspects them until both hands are completed.

Another knuckle pad was taken out of the other hand too.

"It looked like it was sweat soaked," Guevara told the Commission. "I wouldn't say it was rock hard, but harder than it should be."

Guevara also said that the pads were not flexible at all.

Richardson demanded that the pads be checked and asked to keep one of them. He was denied. The inspectors all checked the pads and placed one of them in a box and taped it. Then the initials were signed in felt tip pen of the inspectors and given to another inspector.

Capetillo became very aggressive and agitated, Guevara said.

Margarito testified before the Commission that he was not aware of any wrong doing by his trainer. He said that hand wraps "was not my job."

Capetillo, who is always very easy to agitate, did not surprise those who know his personality. Once again he semi erupted when questioned by his own attorney and repeatedly spouted that "it was an error" and that "I grabbed the wrong pad."

The 59-year-old trainer from Guadalajara said that he's been wrapping hands for 39 years.

"No one has ever complained before," said Capetillo to the Commission. "The truth is I was all confused."

The Mexican trainer insists it was all a "big mistake" and that Margarito had nothing to do with it.

"I grabbed the wrong pad," Capetillo said loudly.

Chappelle, the attorney, said, "Twice you grabbed the wrong pad?"

At the end of the proceeding the Commission voted 7-0 to revoke Capetillo's license. Then, Margarito's status was discussed. Most of the people in the room expected Margarito to be exonerated from any blame. But the Commission had other plans and voted 7-0 to revoke the Tijuana boxer's license too.

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“You have some responsibility,” said Commissioner Dr. Christopher Giza to Margarito.

Post reflection

The hearing room was crowded with boxing people. Present were Top Rank’s Bob Arum, Dan Goossen of Goossen-Tutor Promotions, Richard Schaefer of Golden Boy Promotions, and at least eight other promoters. Also in the capacity crowd were former fighter Ruben Castillo, and Riverside cut man Willie Shunke, who gave a hand wrapping demonstration with one of the Riverside Franco boys.

Arum was incensed at the Commission’s taking Margarito’s license. “I’ll never fight in this state again,” he told several Commissioners. “I’ll fight this (Commission result) all the way.”

Mosley

On Feb. 9, Monday night, I had met Sugar Shane Mosley in Los Angeles with a few other writers and representatives of Golden Boy Promotions.

Mosley told me personally that he didn’t think Margarito knew anything about illegal hand wraps or pads.

“As boxers we just stick our hands out and let the trainers wrap our hands,” said Mosley. “We don’t know what’s going on. We’re concentrating on the fight, not the hand wraps. I’m focused.”

The new WBA welterweight champion said he did not think Margarito should be penalized.

“I like Margarito,” said Mosley who has known Margarito for over a decade. “He’s a good guy. I don’t think he would do anything wrong. But I don’t know about the trainer.”

Knuckle Pad

Before the CSAC had ruled on both Capetillo and Margarito, discussion between two journalists and myself focused on how Margarito could not know if there was a hard pad in his wraps.

One of the actual knuckle pads used by Capetillo on Margarito’s hands was on a table 10 feet away from me. I walked over to the table and asked the deputy district attorney Chappelle to feel the knuckle pad exhibit and object of the hearing. I felt the knuckle pad that was placed in a plastic zip wrap a good 15 seconds and realized that it felt soft. Maybe a little old and soft, but not hard as I expected. It felt like old gauze. One of the doctors told me that when it is moistened it would get harder. And that is why the Commission makes it illegal to wet hand wraps.