

Borges BLASTS Margarito and Arum!

Written by Ron Borges

Monday, 16 February 2009 19:00

If Antonio Margarito fights anywhere, inside or outside the United States, for the next year, the California Athletic Commission should ban him from boxing for life.

If Bob Arum promotes him, or uses one of his minions like Fernando Beltran to do it, he should be banned as well.

These are harsh words and not written without much thought. Three weeks have passed since Margarito and his trainer, Javier Capetillo, were accused of tampering with the hand wraps Capetillo put on the welterweight champion's fists before his Jan. 24 fight against Shane Mosley. Since then the CSAC has revoked both of their licenses, effectively banning them from boxing in the United States for a year but making it easier for them to find work in rings outside the U.S. Predictably, Arum has screamed bloody murder that the Constitution has been trod upon by the 7-0 vote of the limp-witted CASAC that concluded Margarito was responsible for what was put on, and under, those hand wraps.

Margarito argued that he had no idea what was going on and that if anyone was at fault it was Capetillo. His defenders in the media claim he was penalized only for a strict rule infraction, as if there are two types – strict and what else exactly?

Margarito said he noticed nothing even though he was found to have moistened wraps and a hardening knuckle pad according to the commission's inspectors, who by the way never would have noticed had Mosley's trainer, Nazim Richardson, not questioned those wraps even though Che Guevara was allegedly "inspecting" the wrapping as it was being done.

If Margarito noticed nothing then what that tells me is he's used to wearing wet wraps since how do you not notice your wraps on your hand are wet? How do you not notice knuckle pads that were, according to inspector Mike Bray, "moist and dirty looking with a white substance smeared across the pad, like a cast plaster"? How do you not notice any of that? Were you sleeping?

The only way I can think of is you're used to it.

Perhaps there is another explanation but Margarito didn't offer one and Capetillo's was the lame equivalent of "a sparring partner ate my homework" when he claimed another fighter put the wrong wraps in the equipment bag.

You mean he put the ones with the brick in them but you didn't notice? Didn't notice that they were wet when it is clear in the California rulebook that you cannot moisten those wraps?

Here then is what Margarito and Arum want the boxing fan to believe – a veteran, world championship fighter didn't notice his wraps were wet or his knuckle pads were smeared with some as yet unknown substance that commission inspectors say was hardening on his hand?

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Didn't notice that wet gauze? You ever had wet gauze on your hand or ankle or foot? Didn't notice it was wet or didn't notice anything different, that's the real question.

Arum, predictably, went over the moon when his fighter was suspended, insisting "It's the most bizarre thing I've ever experienced. It's not going to hold up. The commission determined Margarito knew nothing and did nothing wrong but that he is head of his team, so he's responsible for the trainer...How can you revoke somebody's license when they didn't do anything wrong or attempt to do anything wrong? Capetillo admitted he made an inadvertent mistake and said Tony knew nothing about it."

Well, there's testimony you can rely on. Margarito's trainer, who is paid by him, says he knew nothing. That's what Bernard Madoff said after he wired that \$15.5 million in dirty money to his wife, too.

Nobody knew anything. It all just happened. Just like all of a sudden a fighter who six years ago was 26-3 with 17 knockouts suddenly blossomed into a guy who wins 11 of his next 12 with 10 knockouts. One minute Antonio Margarito is knocking out slightly more than half the guys he's faced (58.6 per cent) and then, against far more difficult competition, he's knocking out 91 per cent of the guys he beats?

The latter doesn't even qualify as circumstantial evidence against Margarito but it should make you wonder. So should the way he destroyed Kermit Cintron twice, the same Cintron who went the distance against a larger Sergio Martinez last Saturday night to earn a questionable draw. So should the beating Margarito gave another Arum fighter, Miguel Cotto, making him quit on one knee after damaging him in a way no one had come close to and made him retreat in a way he never had before.

That's two guys who had fought a total of 64 times and had one common denominator – the only man to ever beat them was Antonio Margarito and he knocked the stuffings out of both of them.

That doesn't mean Margarito's gloves were loaded in those fights. It doesn't mean that was what Capetillo was up to on Jan. 24 in the locker room at the Staples Center in Los Angeles before Nazim Richadson did what the commisison's inspectors did not – which was his job – and noticed something didn't seem or feel right about the hand wraps on Margarito's hands. What it does mean is that the state of Denmark may not be the only place where something is rotten.

The CSAC, for the record, never said as Arum claimed that Margarito knew "nothing." What they said was he's responsible for what's put on his hands if he's going to be paid to assault another man with them for a living.

What Capetillo and Margarito did that night will forever taint his accomplishments and call into question their honesty. What Arum did after that ruling was make a fool of himself but at least one with enough transparency that his other top fighter, Cotto, saw through it.

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Speaking to a reporter from Primera Hora in Puerto Rico last week an angry Cotto said of Arum, "It seems like Top Rank is not thinking about the welfare of a human being and is only concerned with money. They know that Margarito and his team knew what they were putting on his hands.

"TO TELL PEOPLE THAT KNOW ABOUT BOXING THAT HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THEY WERE PUTTING ON HIS HANDS IS HARD TO BELIEVE. EVERYONE IN HIS GROUP WAS CONSCIOUS OF WHAT WAS BEING DONE FOR THE FIGHT WITH MOSLEY."

Earlier Cotto said on a national conference call with the media to hype his Feb. 21 fight against Michael Jennings for the vacant WBO welterweight title that, "This is a sport, not a slaughter house...If he's suspended for one year, he should be suspended everywhere. I don't think he should fight. If he can't fight in the United States, he shouldn't be able to fight at all."

After Cotto's surprisingly blunt criticism, Arum said Cotto was entitled to his opinion but Margarito is entitled to make a living and if there are places in Mexico or elsewhere willing to license him he will remain his promoter and that he would "do the best I can for him."

The best thing Bob Arum could do for Antonio Margarito is tell him to serve his time because the penalty is a slap on the loaded wrist. Margarito has not fought more than twice a year since 2000. He fought on Jan. 24 and earned millions and in theory could fight again next Jan. 24, meaning he would have missed one fight from his normal two-fight per year schedule of the past eight years.

That's not much of a penalty for, at best, putting his reputation and his sport's legitimacy at risk and, at the worst, putting another man's life at risk.

As for Bob Arum, his handling of this matter reminds you once again just how boxing marginalized itself as a sport in the eyes of the American public. It committed suicide with a lot of co-conspirators helping to load the gun.