

Three Surgeries Later, Israel Vazquez Is Good To Go

Written by Ralph Gonzalez
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It was after the third round that he knew something was wrong. WBC emeritus super bantamweight champion Israel Vazquez was in the midst of a third brutal confrontation against Rafael Marquez. "My vision was blurry in my right eye," Vazquez said. "I thought it was the Vaseline that was being applied by my cut-man so I kept fighting on until the twelfth round."

Several days later when the symptoms didn't subside, Vazquez called on his long time manager and friend, Frank Espinoza, who took the highly regarded fighter to some of the top ophthalmologists in the Los Angeles area. It was determined that Vazquez had a detached retina and would need surgery.

Three surgeries and some recovery time later, Vazquez has now been medically cleared to work out in the gym as he prepares for a possible comeback to the world of professional boxing. Vazquez has been out of action since March of 2008 when he defeated Marquez by split decision in what is considered to be the one of the most compelling and unique trilogy of fights in the history of the sport.

"I've missed working out," Vazquez said. "The gymnasium is where I've spent most of my life." He's limited to working lightly for the moment but is looking forward to what he hopes will be a full comeback against some of the elite fighters in his division. Juan Manuel Lopez and Rafael Marquez are two fighters that come to mind. Lopez, a sensational undefeated Puerto Rican fighter, is currently considered the top name in the division. A fourth fight against Rafael Marquez is also a realistic consideration.

Said Espinoza, "It's been a long process. We've had to go to several doctors in order to get different opinions and dealing with surgeries is always a challenge but we're a team and we're in this together so I always make sure Israel gets the best attention and care possible."

As far as his boxing future is concerned, Espinoza believes in taking things one step at a time. "There are a lot of options out there but we can't rush into anything at this point," he said. "The most important thing is Israel's vision and making sure we get him back to form at a nice steady pace." Espinoza has been guiding Vazquez's career since 2001 when he first brought the Mexico City native to southern California.

A few years after settling in Los Angeles, Vazquez started training at the Wild Card Gym. It was there that he sparred regularly with pound for pound great Manny Pacquiao: "I would've never believed that Manny would accomplish so much so quickly. We always went to war in the gym and of course I picked up some things from him just like I always do when I spar against great fighters like Johnny Tapia and Shane Mosley."

He's still amazed by the Filipino's performances. "He's almost superhuman at this point," Vazquez said. "It's his speed that gives everyone problems. What he's done in the ring is nothing short of spectacular. He's an inspiration to a lot of people including fighters like myself."

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Would Vazquez ever follow Pac-Man's lead and challenge an opponent in a much higher weight division? "I definitely see myself moving up to featherweight and maybe in the future who knows? I'm a fighter. That's my profession and if a big fight like that presented itself before me then why not?"

At this point, Vazquez is feeling antsy. He plans to give fans exactly what they expect from him should he receive his final medical clearance to get back in the ring. "It's all in God's hands now. He makes the final decision. I believe I have many more exciting performances left in me. I have many more thrills and wars to fight for all the fans who've followed my career," Vazquez reiterated. "I want to tell everyone to keep supporting me and that I'll never let them down. The best is yet to come."

For more on Israel Vazquez go to: www.espinozaboxingclub.com