

Robert Guerrero Looks To Show Homies The Real Ghost

Written by Raymond Markarian
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Hearing people question his heart is nothing new for Robert "The Ghost" Guerrero. But the two time featherweight champion is ready to show his worth.

Earlier this year, it was all smiles and happy thoughts for the Guerrero camp. The southpaw felt vindicated after an eleven month contract dispute with his previous promoter Goossen Tutor that kept him out of the ring was hashed out, and his boxing career was once again at full throttle. Guerrero signed on with Golden Boy Promotions immediately after, and knocked out an unworthy opponent in less than a minute in his first fight back from the hiatus. Then, he was geared to fight in front of not only his hometown crowd, San Jose, Ca, but also a national TV audience on HBO.

See, unlike most other sports, a home crowd in boxing often brings added scrutiny from fans and the media. Fight fans are generally louder when a native son who made waves in the boxing world comes back to base to put on a show for friends and proud neighbors. A fighter might tighten up in front of the home crowd. Expectations are through the roof.

If you listened to the reports after Robert Guerrero's last fight in March against Daud Cino Yordan, it could be argued that there probably wouldn't be much to like about the Gilroy, Ca native. Detractors on that unfortunate night dubbed Guerrero (23-1, 16 knockouts) a human shell in warrior trunks, a fighter unwilling to knuckle down at the first glance of his own blood.

In an event billed to be a night of rising stars this past March, Robert Guerrero was the hometown attraction in a tripleheader featuring Golden Boy Promotions brightest young talent; James Kirkland, Victor Ortiz, and Guerrero, who opened the bill.

From a promotional standpoint it made sense to make Guerrero fight first on that night. The idea was that the hometown guy would bring fans into the arena early, knock out his opponent, and get the crowd pumped and ready for the other two pupils to shine.

Guerrero's night did end quickly, but not the way he wanted. The bout was declared a no contest after an accidental clash of heads in the second round caused a cut over Guerrero's right eye. The cut was deep, and had a resonating effect on the 130 pound pugilist. "It took me about a good month to recover from the eye injury," Guerrero said. "I mean I did not do anything. I was making sure that I wouldn't do anything crazy to reinjure myself."

After the fight, Guerrero acquired possibly the worst tag a fighter can receive. The doubters branded him a quitter. But Guerrero thinks that they have little right to judge.

Instead of pouting about an abrupt ending to what was supposed to be his shining night in the ring, though, the Gilroy based fighter views the setback as a form of motivation.

"I took it as a fuel burner," he said. "This just pumped me up to get back into the ring to show

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all of the doubters and critics what I am about.”

The blowback from the no contest was loud. And Guerrero heard all about it. HBO commentary Max Kellerman questioned Guerrero’s pride during the telecast, saying the cut over Guerrero’s eye didn’t look serious enough to stop a fight, and many boxing media outlets followed Kellerman’s cry.

“It’s boxing. You are going to hear the good and the bad of it,” Guerrero said. “Unfortunately the fight got stopped early and I took a lot of heat from it. But it is about how you bounce back from it.”

Now fully recovered from an eye injury, Guerrero takes on Efen Hinojosa (30-5-1, 17 KOs)--who replaced Jackson Asiku, who had replaced Johnnie Edwards, pulled out late Thursday night because of an injury--in front of the same hometown crowd that witnessed his last fight end.

Guerrero says the criticism he received is a great form of motivation. “Oh man, I am just excited to go back out there to show them what kind of fighter I am,” he said. “This put my back against the world. Now I have to fight my way out. It pumps me up a lot.”

Guerrero has been in training in Glendale, Ca in preparation for his fight with Hinojosa. He says the injury has not hampered his workouts thus far.

“I have been training for two months. I am getting good work,” Guerrero said. “Preparation is going real good. I am getting good sparring here in L.A.”

Guerrero feels reinvigorated. He is grandly ambitious, and wants to face the best after an expected win against Hinojosa. “This win will get me right back on track. It will be another step towards a world title fight.” Guerrero said. “I have been wanted to get into some big fights for some time. I want to get a (Juan Manuel) Marquez fight. Humberto Soto is out there. There are a lot of big fighters out there, especially at 130 or 135 pounds.”

Hometown fans in boxing can be harsh when things go bad. Ask Cory Spinks after his knockout loss to Zab Judah or Evander Holyfield after struggling against Bert Cooper in 1991. Guerrero is looking forward to greeting the people of San Jose with a rousing performance.

“I am excited about it. Situations like this make me stronger. I can’t wait to go back there and just give them a fight,” Guerrero said. “Last time I went out there, the fight was stopped early, and no one really got to see me fight. I can’t wait to get back out there and prove people wrong.”