It had been eight years since I last interviewed “Dynamite” Danny Perez. The San Diegan had just won the NABF welterweight title from Sam Garr and was looking to get a rematch against the newest rising sensation, Antonio Margarito. It was one of the first times he’d ever been interviewed and it showed. He was fidgety and provided me with mostly one word answers.

The nervous 24 year old from back then is now 32 and a lot more relaxed after having gone through a rollercoaster of a career.

Two fight against Margarito, (one for the world title), a brutal stabbing, a move up in weight to middleweight, a three year layoff and subsequent comeback have morphed Perez (34-5, 17 KOs) into a more confident and focused individual.

“You mature with age and you learn to take it easy and stop doing stupid things,” Perez said from his manager Mark Diaz’s gym in Vista, California.

One of those stupid things led to Perez getting stabbed during an altercation. It was in the fall of 2003 that an argument after a party led to Perez getting knifed twice in the stomach, twice in the back and then getting clubbed with a crowbar in the back of the head. By the time he arrived to the emergency room, the doctors believed he was dead. He would’ve been a goner if his fast thinking friend hadn’t rushed his profusely bleeding pal quickly to the hospital.

Perez remembers passing in and out of consciousness on the way there. He awoke once before the surgery and then again after. “I couldn’t believe I was lying in the hospital with all these machines around me,” remembered Perez. “I was thinking about my career and my future. Not knowing what was ahead of me was scary.”

Just months before, in October 2002, he had lost his WBO title shot against Antonio Margarito in what was a virtual wipeout on the judges’ cards. Margarito stalked and Perez boxed and survived.

“I feel like I had nothing left for the fight,” Perez said. He’d been in training camp with Oscar De La Hoya in Big Bear for a month and a half, preparing the “Golden Boy” for his mega match against Fernando Vargas. “I came down from the mountains, I got a few days rest and then I started my camp for Margarito. I burned out. I left it all in the gym.”

He’d fought the “Tijuana Tornado” once before under the sweltering Palm Springs sun, losing an eight round split decision in 1999 in a fight that many felt he’d won. He put Margarito on his back with an impressive right hand in the first round. “It was a close fight. We were both up and coming and it could’ve gone either way,” Perez said in an attempt at modesty. He then smiled sheepishly. “I do think I won though.”

Margarito’s alleged “loaded gloves” scandal has affected the psyche of every fighter on his

record, including Perez, who sometimes wonders about their encounter. “I do think about it. If he had them (loaded gloves) or not. If he did, I didn’t feel it because he never really hit me,” Perez said. He was hesitant to comment on the controversy at first but warmed up to the topic. “If he did it against Shane Mosley and got caught then that’s on him and his team.”

After taking six months off to recover from the stabbing, the arduous task of getting back to the gym began. It not only took a physical toll but a mental one as well. “I worried about the stab wounds. I was thinking have these wounds healed correctly? Especially once my first fight back took place,” Perez said.

Three months of training later, he defeated the talented Mexican Olympian Jose Luis Zertuche. Two more quality wins and then he was matched against David “Destroyer” Lopez for a crack at the IBA middleweight title. It was obvious from his softer looking physique that he didn’t belong at that weight. Perez lost by unanimous decision to the naturally bigger man. He looked tired in the ring, like he didn’t want to be there anymore.

It was then that a three year layoff ensued. He describes the period of retirement as a chance to escape from the sport he’d been practicing since he was twelve years old. “I needed some time to enjoy life until I got the urge to start fighting again,” Perez said. His first fight back was in July 2008 at one of Bobby D’s show in San Diego. “It was a chance to get a lot of the rust out. I felt at home again in the ring but I realized I needed to work on a lot of things.”

The hard work with Diaz began. He followed up with two wins against some very credible opposition in Julio “Baby Face” Garcia and Eric Mitchell. His career in full swing again, he got the call to fight former world champion Carlos Quintana on ESPN’s Friday Night Fights on June fifth. The slick Puerto Rican was returning after suffering a devastating first round knockout loss to Paul Williams. Perez had been preparing for Quintana’s particularly crafty style but now all that goes out the window. On Monday, Perez learned that Quintana pulled out of their fight which was set to take place in Miami. His new opponent, Carlos Molina (16-5, 4 KOs) doesn’t pose as daunting a task as Quintana but Perez knows too well that all fights are risky. “A fight is a fight and no one can be underestimated. We both want the win at all cost,” Perez said. “I’m in a different situation. I’m 32 years old and my time’s running out. I have the talent and I still want to be a world champion. I’ve had many chances and I’m grateful, but let’s face it. From now on, every fight is my last chance. I can’t lose. I have a mission and I’m not letting anyone stop me.”

PROGRAMMING NOTE
Danny Perez Video on TSS: I would like to direct your attention to a video and interview I created with Danny Perez. It’s currently running on the front page of TSS. I hope you like it. I recommend that you enlarge the viewing window by clicking the button on the far right bottom.

You can also view it on youtube.com by clicking here. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QAiHNUz5-tw