

Abner Mares has been fighting all his life. It comes naturally when you're one of eleven brothers. Food, affection and a room to sleep in are some of the basics he often found himself struggling to obtain.

For the 23 year-old father of one, it was a lesson well learned. "I'd never have that many kids," Mares (18-0, 11 KOs) laughed at the notion when asked. "I saw how difficult it was. The responsibility to provide for and to unite such a large family is overwhelming. I wouldn't have more than two or three kids at the most."

For now he's content to be the father of a three year old girl as he awaits confirmation on his next fight. He's coming off a sixth round stoppage of Jonathan Perez which took place on the Manny Pacquiao-Ricky Hatton undercard.

Originally scheduled to fight as part of the now defunct Floyd Mayweather Jr. vs. Juan Manuel Marquez card in July, Mares continues training undeterred. "I got news about the fight falling out about two weeks ago but I'm still in the gym. I'm confident my promoters at Golden Boy will put me on another card soon," Mares said. He's been preparing in the desert city of Coachella, California where he trains under the tutelage of Joel Diaz. Diaz is also the trainer of WBC junior welterweight champion Timothy Bradley.

Mares is new to this particular training camp, but not by choice. He was formerly trained by the well known Ignacio "Nacho" Beristain in Mexico City. Beristain stepped away as Mares' trainer after the former Mexican Olympian decided to join Frank Espinoza's stable of highly regarded fighters. "I spoke to Nacho and we're still friends but this is a business and if he's not happy that I signed with Frank then it's his right to stop training me," Mares said regarding the issue.

Espinoza has no idea why Beristain stopped working with Mares. "I really don't know what's going on in Nacho's mind. It doesn't really matter," Espinoza stated when asked about his take. "This is all about Abner's well being and furthering his career. That's what's really important. I think Joel will do a fine job."

It's not just the change of scenery and trainer that may have an effect on Mares. Going from jogging during the early morning in the midst of Mexico City's high altitude to Coachella's low altitude takes some getting used to. "All changes are tough but like every good fighter, you find a way to adapt. My new trainer has made me feel at home and that helps too," Mares said. "Training with Nacho was a great experience and I picked up all the useful things he taught me." Beristain is famed for being the trainer of some of Mexico's greatest world champions. He currently trains Juan Manuel Marquez who is considered one of the top three fighters in the world.

Beristain's influence on Mares has been obvious with every performance. The Mexico City trainer is a proponent of what HBO commentator Larry Merchant called "techno boxing" during the broadcast of one of Mares' fights. This is a term used to describe a boxer/puncher style

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utilized by fighters like Marquez and Mares who choose to box patiently, befuddling and picking apart their opponents with precision counters before they attack with full force, sometimes finishing off their rivals in dramatic fashion a la Marquez vs. Juan Diaz.

It was exactly in this manner that Mares defeated his toughest test to date in former world title contender Diosdado Gabi who was stopped in the second round in March 2008. Mares thought it was going to be his most difficult fight. "He's the biggest name I've beaten so far. I felt like I was going to have problems with him because of his experience but the fight actually turned out to be the easiest one I've had so far," he said.

A few months later, Mares' world was rocked when he received some disheartening news.

It was in the month of October 2008 that his boxing journey almost ended when a detached retina was discovered. It was during a routine check that the abnormality surfaced. "It was a real scare when the doctor told me I'd never fight again," Mares remembered. "I was thinking 'what else am I going to do?'"

He eventually went through surgery and followed up with exams. His eye healed up enough for the doctor to approve his return to the ring. "It was a big relief," Mares said. "I feel like I was given a second chance and I want to make the most of it. It's one of the reasons I'm hungrier than ever."

Although he's considered a top prospect in most boxing circles, he feels he has a lot to learn. "At this point I'm still a rookie. I'm always learning. I try to learn from everything in life. All my former trainers, Floyd Mayweather Jr., Rudy Perez, they all taught me something and I'm sure I'll learn from Joel too."

He admits missing the friends he made during his time in Mexico City but he's glad to be in southern California with a new trainer and manager. "Frank (Espinoza) has a big name and a great career as a manager. Especially with the lower weights," Mares said. "As soon as I signed with him he started working and hasn't stopped. I feel like my career is going to move a little faster now and I'm happy about it."

Espinoza, who manages Israel Vazquez and several other undefeated prospects, always believed Mares was a special fighter. "There's just something about his style. His footwork is remarkable. His combinations are fluid and he's fast. He's a future world champion without a doubt in my mind," Espinoza stated. "As far as I'm concerned, he's one of the top bantamweights in the world right now and he's only going to get better."

He's excited to get back in the ring. Mares will most likely end up on the rescheduled Floyd Mayweather vs. Juan Manuel Marquez card on September 19th. "The fans waiting for my next fight need to know that they're going to see a more explosive and more exciting fighter. A fighter that would never quit," he said. "They should know that I don't just want to be a world champion, I want to be an idol for younger people to look up to. They can expect a lot of great things from me. I'm just barely getting started."

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On the web: Mares vs. Gabi

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ziNnV3YWZHo>