

“The Ghost” Guerrero Expects Malcolm Klassen’s Best

Written by David A. Avila

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Robert “The Ghost” Guerrero has plenty of dreams, lofty goals for the future and plenty of ideas.

But he knows his next fight could be a distinct nightmare if he thinks beyond.

“This guy can really fight,” said Guerrero (24-1-1, 17 KOs). “He’s really good.”

The guy who can wreck Guerrero’s dreams is South Africa’s Malcolm Klassen (24-4-2, 14 KOs), a two-time world champion who holds the IBF junior lightweight title. They will clash on Saturday at the Toyota Center in Houston, Texas. HBO will televise the event.

A lot of ifs are drifting in Guerrero’s camp should he emerge victorious against the South African. If he wins there are possible fights with Humberto Soto, Steve Luevano, Rocky Juarez, Chris John or even the slightly unknown but remarkable Jorge Linares of Venezuela.

It’s heady stuff.

“I can’t think of those fights at all. This guy Klassen is really good, I’ve seen tapes of him,” said Guerrero, whose last loss in 2006 was erased when Orlando Salido tested positive for steroids.

Though Guerrero is a two-time world champion in his own right, the native of Gilroy, California, the so-called Garlic capital of the world, doesn’t plan to stink up the joint when he meets Klassen. He purchased insurance figuratively by heading to the mountain domain of Sugar Shane Mosley.

“I had been up here before with Shane,” said Guerrero, a tall lean boxer-puncher who hits from the southpaw side. “He’s one of the best fighters in the world pound for pound. If anybody can teach me new things it’s Shane.”

Up in Big Bear Lake, with altitudes that exceed 10,000 feet, training takes on a different and more taxing effect on a prizefighter.

“Before I came here I was able to do eight rounds easy,” said Guerrero, who prides himself on his conditioning. “Up here I barely did two rounds and I couldn’t do anything else.”

It’s Mosley’s domain and the Pomona speedster used it to prepare for his victorious challenge of the much bigger Antonio Margarito last January. In the mountains the welterweight champion has remained for most of the year hoping that Manny Pacquiao would accept his challenge. It did not happen.

“I did what I had to do and I can’t do no more,” said Mosley about Pacquiao choosing to fight Puerto Rico’s Miguel Cotto. “I’m leaving the rest up to Richard Schaefer (CEO for Goldey Boy Promotions) to decide what comes next.”

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Speed and more speed have been primary weapons for Mosley throughout his successful career. Of course his moves, strategies and overall boxing prowess are also weapons that he’s used to amass one of the most sterling careers in the last 20 years.

Guerrero and his team realized that Mosley could be of tremendous help against Klassen, a fighter who resembles him in style and technique.

“Klassen moves around real well and is very quick,” said Bob Santos who advises and helps with Guerrero’s physical conditioning. “Who moves better than Shane Mosley?”

Mosley benefits too. Though Guerrero is a junior lightweight, the lefty packs big time wallop in both hands and speed plus.

“I can see the Ghost moving up to welterweight,” said Mosley, a former lightweight and junior middleweight world champion. “He’s tall and has good power and speed.”

The Pomona fighter saw advantages that Guerrero has and has tweaked the Gilroy fighter’s right jab.

“His jab is going to be a key,” said Mosley of Guerrero’s weaponry. “This guy moves around a lot and moves well.”

Mosley provided sparring for Guerrero and can also supercede Klassen’s power.

“However strong this guy is he won’t hit harder or be faster than Shane Mosley,” said Ruben Guerrero, who trains his son. “It’s not going to be an easy fight but I think we’re ready for him.”

Guerrero knows it’s a critical step toward his dreams of winning world titles in different weight classes.

“I’m ready and I’ve done all I can to prepare for this fight,” said Guerrero.

California fights

Fight card tonight

In the City of Commerce, All Star Boxing Promotions features super middleweights Daniel Perez (8-6-1) against Benjamin Diaz (10-3-2) at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in the Commerce Casino on Thursday Aug. 20. For tickets call (323) 816-2000.

Friday fight card

In Redondo Beach, former heavyweight contender Lance Whitaker continues his journey toward the upper tiers of the heavyweight division when he faces Great Britain’s Mathew Ellis at the Performing Arts Center in Redondo Beach on Friday Aug. 21. For tickets and information (702) 656-9570.

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Saturday fight card

At the Pala Casino on Saturday, Aug. 22, former winner of the Contender reality TV show Grady Brewer (25-11, 14 KOs) fights last-minute replacement Albert Onolunose (18-0, 7 KOs) an undefeated middleweight out of Canada. It’s a very dangerous fight for Brewer who had prepared extensively for Anthony Thompson. But that fighter pulled out less than a week ago and Brewer is forced to fight a young and very hungry fighter originally from Nigeria. A similar thing happened to Julio Diaz who was preparing for Joel Casamayor. When that lefty veteran pulled out Diaz was forced to fight right-hander Rolando Reyes and was knocked out.