

Low-key Marquez Says Postponement Time Aided Him

Written by Michael Woods
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When you are running a promotion involving Floyd Mayweather, there isn't too much of a need for his foe, whomever that may be, to act as a foil for Floyd. Mayweather, with his provocative pronouncements and familial drama, does more than enough in the realm of trashtalking to satisfy the pre-fight hype quota. So, no one expected much in the way of newsmaking yapping from Juan Manuel Marquez on a Tuesday conference call to discuss his Sept. 19th outing with Floyd, in which he'll attempt to become the first Mexican to win a title in a fourth weight division.

Marquez, joined on the line by trainer "Nacho" Beristain and promoter Oscar De La Hoya, said he was in line to perform well in Las Vegas, and said that the fight's postponement from July 18, due to Floyd's rib injury, has served him well. He is suffering from no injuries, nagging or otherwise, he said. The extra time, said he and trainer Beristain, gave him more weeks to pack on muscle, which will likely come in handy, as he'll be weighing in at 144 pounds or less, a tremendous leap from the 135 pound limit he fought at in his last effort, a TKO9 win over Juan Diaz in February. The trainer said Marquez weighs a shade over 143 pounds right now.

De La Hoya came on, and referred to Sept. 19 as "the biggest event this year in the sport of boxing," a designation which would not pass muster with Pacman and Miguel Cotto fans, who see their Nov. 14 tussle as the clash of 2009. Oscar said that in his eyes Marquez is the number two man in the game, pound for pound, behind Floyd, again a declaration that is open to debate, especially among devoted Pacmaniacs. Not surprisingly, since a title isn't up for grabs, De La Hoya said that fans care mostly about the matchups, and since there are so many titles out there, can't keep track of who has one anyway. "The fans don't care what title is at stake," he said. He congratulated Golden Boy for loading up the Sept. 19 card, and said it was high time a promoter has done this. "That's how boxing will progress...the best fighting the best."

Marquez said come Sept. 19, he'll use attributes that have lifted him to that 50-4 mark, including hand speed and ring smarts. He's been taking off his heavy sparring gloves, he said, and lacing up lighter gloves to keep his hand speed alive.

JMM isn't banking on Floyd being rusty, seeing as the Michigan fighter, aged 32, last gloved up in December 2007, against Ricky Hatton. "I'm training for the best Mayweather, and looking forward to the best Mayweather," JMM said.

De La Hoya said that he isn't on board with those who see JMM as being too small for Mayweather, and thinks boxing is in a post-weight class period, where speed and desire are more important than anything else when considering matchups between boxers of different weight points. Mayweather, Oscar said, may be overtly affected by coming down to 144, from the 147-plus weight he's been campaigning at in recent years, just as Oscar was when he met Manny Pacquiao, in the December 2008 disaster.

Marquez said that his defense, his bobbing and slipping, will be vital come Sept. 19, so he can make Floyd miss, and counter him. He's been getting sparring work from 18-2 Mexican

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Alejandro Barrera, and an unnamed Panamanian fighter, his trainer said. Beristain said a Venezuelan boxer, hopefully not Jorge Linares' little bro Carlos, a 4-1 middleweight who is a bit big as he looks to keep JMM's speed alive, will be coming to camp for sparring shortly.

Beristain is refreshingly forthright, quite often, and on this call, he dropped a few newsworthy bits. First, he said that he does believe Mayweather will make for a tougher fight for his boxer than did Manny Pacquiao. Also, he said that at times, Marquez' concentration can wane, as he gets bored with the routine of getting ready for a fight, which is understandable for a 36-year-old man who turned pro in 1993. But he hopes that the lure of becoming the first Mexican to win a title in a fourth weight class would provide an extra impetus for Marquez to stay hungry. Beristain said that Marquez' hand-speed has in fact increased as compared to previous camps. By the way, Marquez turned 36 on Sunday; he said he celebrated in low-key fashion with family. He was similarly low key when asked if he'd be stopping Mayweather come Sept. 19, as one WWE wrestler stated on the "Raw" show, which Mayweather appeared on Monday. "I don't like to predict," JMM said. "If the kayo comes, great. I'm going to push him."

Marquez didn't take the bait when asked to respond to Mayweather's assertion that even if he is a bit rusty, or at 32, has slipped off his peak, he is still now better than Marquez has ever been or will be. "I'm glad he's thinking that way," JMM said.

Those wondering what might come next for the Sept. 19 winner didn't get any hints from Oscar. Maybe the Pacman-Cotto winner? "Right now, let's concentrate on this fight," ODLH said. A win for Marquez, he did say, would put him near Julio Cesar Chavez territory, in the eyes of Mexican fight fans.

Feel free to add your three cents, TSS U. Think Marquez is a bit light three weeks before the scrap? Might we be under-weighting the Floyd-coming-down-in-weight factor a bit? Must the winner of the Sept. 19 fight take on the Pacquiao-Cotto winner? Fire away!