

The Return Of Abner Mares

Written by David A. Avila
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A last minute scratch by an opponent forced Golden Boy Promotions to search for an opponent for bantamweight contender Abner Mares a year ago. They ultimately found him in the Mexico City gym Mares used for training.

Nobody thought much of it. The opponent was one of Mares' teammates trained by Nacho Beristain, who at that time prepared both fighters. The fight took place at Morongo Casino over a year ago and though Mares won, he also lost. At least temporarily.

The next fight was scheduled for October 2008 and Mares visited a doctor for another routine check up. It was just routine. The young muscular fighter who fought on the Mexican Olympic team and opened boxing scouts' eyes discovered one important thing about physicals-sometimes they're not routine.

"The doctor told me I had a torn retina and my career in boxing was over," Mares said of the doctor's evaluation.

Mares said his boxing life flashed before him.

"First of all when the doctor told me I wasn't going to be able to fight any more with a torn retina, obviously I thought my career was over," said Mares, 23, who is one of Golden Boy's prized contenders. "I started thinking what am I going to do? I have a family to support and bills to pay."

Another doctor, a specialist, recommended surgery and after everything was done, including therapy, a new evaluation was spewed. This time the doctor said his eye had healed completely. By March 2009, he was cleared for action.

"It was a blessing from God," said Mares about being able to return to boxing.

Mares (18-0, 11 KOs) is the star attraction for Golden Boy Promotions fight card on Thursday, Aug. 27, at Club Nokia in Los Angeles when he faces dangerous Carlos Fulgencio (11-2-1, 7 KOs) of the Dominican Republic. The fight will be shown on Versus TV.

Two more things changed for Mares, he acquired a manager in Frank Espinoza and changed trainers when Nacho Beristain deemed that it would not fit training Mares whose new manager also advises Israel Vazquez, a three-time foe of Beristain's Rafael Marquez.

Back to California flew Mares. From the super smoggy, cluttered metropolis of Mexico City to the desert remote city of super small Indio and its oven hot temperatures, Mares changed climates in drastic fashion.

"It gets up to 115 degrees here," said Mares. "But I got used to it."

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Now training Mares is boxing's newest ingénue Joel Diaz who also works with world champion Timothy Bradley, prospect Dominic Salcido and brothers Julio and Antonio Diaz, both former world champions. The stable is stacked with talent and capable sparring partners.

"Abner came with a lot of skills. There's really not a lot I need to show him," said Diaz, whose stable is considered one of the best in the West Coast. "He does everything I ask of him."

Mares said working with Diaz is different than in his experience with famed trainers Nacho Beristain and Floyd Mayweather.

"Diaz is very energetic," says Mares. "He gets up to run with me every morning at 5 a.m. I couldn't cheat and not run even if I wanted to."

Whenever Mares enters the ring he brings a style that most experts called explosive.

"Abner Mares is a really strong fighter. Not just an everyday fighter but someone who is aggressive but skillful," said Elizabeth Q. Parr, a writer for a California-based boxing web site. "He attacks but doesn't just bang. When he moves in he does it in a way that he doesn't get hit much in return."

Though he fought three months ago, he considers this his real homecoming.

"A lot of people don't know I fought on May 2, so a lot of people see it as my comeback fight," said Mares who expects to see his old Los Angeles area friends and new Indio acquaintances at the popular new venue in downtown L.A. "I'm pumped and excited to have friends that I know coming to see me."

Thinking back on his injury, Mares also added some new things to his life outside of boxing.

"That injury got me to a point where maybe I can reflect on my life. I'm going back to school," said Mares who now attends Cerritos Community College. "I'm coming out with everything that I have."

Diaz, who's trained three world champions, can see another one coming with Mares.

"He's one of those guys that erupts in the ring," said Diaz. "He's got a lot of talent."

Mares remembers that day almost a year ago when his life as a boxer seemed over for good.

"I really feel blessed," said Mares who spent most of his nights contemplating his second chance at the sport he loves. "All I can do is give it my all."