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Who the heck put a hex on Golden Boy Promotions?

Recently signed WBA junior lightweight titleholder Jorge Linares was knocked out by Mexico's Juan Carlos Salgado last Saturday in Tokyo before a stunned audience. Hours later, in Los Angeles, Israel Vazquez barely survived a firefight against a guy who had lost his last six fights.

Is there some kind of mumbo jumbo by some witch doctor that we don't know about? Is this the work of santaristas at work? Or did somebody at Golden Boy's offices break a mirror?

The Golden Boy jinx continues.

For the past several years a jinx seems to hover above Golden Boy Promotions whenever they signed an elite fighter to their ranks. That fighter would lose his first or second fight and it happened again with Linares who signed in September and the jinx almost tripped up Vazquez who's hoping for a mega fight soon.

Golden Boy executives better check under their beds. Something is going on.

The first sign of a jinx first turned up with Marco Antonio Barrera in 2003. The Mexico City fighter was recently inked with much hoopla and then promptly lost by knockout to Manny Pacquiao. Next, Roger "Speedy" Gonzalez who was thought to be a local fighter who could bring in big crowds lost to Mexico City's Jhonny Gonzalez. Then came Bernard Hopkins. He signed as a business partner after beating Oscar De La Hoya in 2004 and then, after one win, lost twice to Jermain Taylor. The Executioner hadn't lost a fight in 12 years and then was tripped up by the Arkansas prizefighter.

Need more proof?

The next jinx came when Kassim Ouma signed and was subsequently beaten by Russia's Roman Karmazin in 2005 as De La Hoya, Hopkins and Shane Mosley sat in the front row with their mouths open at the one-sided loss. There have been many more instances of guys getting hooked up with GBP and soon thereafter suffering defeat.

Perhaps the biggest most recent upset, aside from Linares, was Juan Diaz.

Diaz was undefeated and recognized as the undisputed lightweight champion of the world. He signed with Golden Boy and subsequently lost to Nate Campbell who battered, bullied and bust up the Houston fighter in March 2008. The list goes on and on.

Linares was considered one of the future super stars in boxing and was seen as near unbeatable. Match makers for Golden Boy envisioned a future collision with IBF junior lightweight titleholder Robert "The Ghost" Guerrero in a super fight. It was going to be the

perfect match between two junior lightweight power-punching machines. Now the dream match needs to be restarted after it puttered out last week.

“He had trouble making the weight,” said Richard Schaefer, CEO for Golden Boy of Linares. “We can still make that match.”

Guerrero too is having problems. Seems he has a contract dispute with his old promoter Goossen-Tutor Promotions who claim he still had more time left on their mutual contract. We’ll see.

When the Ghost fought for GBP the second time last March, he was accidentally butted badly by Indonesia’s Daud Yordan. As blood trickled down his face obstructing his vision a referee asked him if he wanted to continue and he replied he could not see. HBO’s Max Kellerman questioned his fortitude on camera and nearly ruined his career as fans felt Guerrero lacked heart. Two fights later, Guerrero has proven that’s not the case and seemed destined to clash with Linares. Now both Linares and Guerrero are having problems and Golden Boy has to address them.

Is there a jinx? It sure seems to be the case.

Last Saturday Israel Vazquez returned to the ring after five eye surgeries to repair a detached retina. Five surgeries!

After 19 months, nobody expected Vazquez to return as the near-perfect fighting machine as seen when he out-fought fellow Mexico City warrior Rafael Marquez in two of three history-making clashes. But he was facing Colombia’s Angel Priolo who had lost his previous six fights. And with Juan Manuel Lopez fighting on the same day, many expected Vazquez to dominate.

It didn’t happen.

Instead, Priolo landed more blows than Marquez did and couldn’t miss with the right hand all night long until Vazquez slipped into overdrive and obliterated the Colombian veteran in the ninth round. Until the ninth round, it was pretty astounding to see “El Magnifico” sustain that kind of damage.

Frank Espinoza, who manages Vazquez, said it worried him to see his fighter sustain such a beating though he eventually won by knockout.

“Izzie has been with me so long he’s more like a son to me,” said Espinoza. “It was difficult to watch. I really was nervous.”

Outside of the ring Vazquez is one of the true gentlemen of the sport and the most amiable person anyone could be. Fans love him. Their faces showed this worrisome look as their hero absorbed blow after blow. Vazquez’s trainer Rudy Perez looked the most worried of all. He had promised a more defensively capable fighter and saw the opposite. It was a nightmare on 11th

Street.

Vazquez was nonplussed.

“Most of my fights are dramatic victories. That’s my style,” said Vazquez who had swelling and cuts over both eyes.

Across the country Juan Manuel Lopez didn’t look too good either. The good news is the eye that required five surgeries held up.

Dr. J. Sebag of the VMR Institute in Huntington Beach, CA, who performed the final two eye surgeries, was present at the fight.

“I wouldn’t be here if I weren’t confident that the eye would hold up,” said Dr. Sebag.

And it did.

It seems Vazquez will need a couple of more fights before he’s ready to take on a monster like JuanMa or any of the featherweight champions.

“I was rusty,” admitted Vazquez.

Maybe so. It also seems GBP needs to rub some holy water over the workplace.

Fights on television

Sat. Showtime, 8 p.m., Carl Froch (25-0) vs. Andre Dirrell (18-0); Arthur Abraham (30-0) vs. Jermain Taylor (28-3-1).

Sat. Azteca TV, 10 p.m., Brandon Rios (21-0-1) vs. Manuel Perez (14-4-1).