

Israel Vazquez and Justin Fortune Team Up Again

Written by Ralph Gonzalez
Monday, 12 April 2010 19:00

Although Australian born trainer Justin Fortune and Mexico City's ex-world champion, Israel Vazquez, are from continents apart, they've always had a certain chemistry. "We understand each other, we get along great and he respects me like I respect him and that's the end of it, Fortune said from his Hollywood gym where he'll be conditioning Vazquez for his fourth encounter against Rafael Marquez on May 22nd at The Staples Center.

Rudy Perez will be headlining the training duties once again as Vazquez tries to defeat Marquez a third time. Fortune is expected to bring in his expertise in strength training and nutrition. "He's a good friend and a nice guy. We kid around a lot and he creates a good atmosphere for me, Vazquez said. "Even though I don't dominate the English language we have no trouble communicating and I have a lot of confidence in his work. I'm happy that he's back on our team.

As far as Vazquez is concerned, he'd like to see Fortune remain as a permanent fixture. "God willing, I'd like for Justin to be with us for the rest of my career. I have that much respect for what he does.

Vazquez's manager, Frank Espinoza, agrees that the chemistry between the two has always been strong. He was the impetus for bringing Fortune back on board. "I want to give Israel every chance at beating Marquez and adding Justin to our team makes us stronger, Espinoza stated. "It's very important that our fighters have the best people at their disposal and he brings a lot to the table.

Both men worked together previously until Fortune's split with Vazquez's then head trainer Freddie Roach. The two split up unceremoniously as accusations were thrown around by both parties. Fortune declined to speak about the situation. "I've got nothing to say about that. I don't want to say anything that might get me sued. Besides, this is all about Israel Vazquez and making sure he puts on a stellar performance. That's what's truly important.

He doesn't care much for the "conditioning and speed coach title. "That's a label that was given to me by Roach but I'm a trainer, he said. "I want to get away from all that and just work on getting my own fighters from my gym to the very top. I want to have my own world champions eventually. When that happens, it'll truly be a great time in my life.

The 44 year old former power-lifter made the transition into boxing at the age of 23 and compiled a record of 11-2 before meeting his biggest challenge in the ring. "I got served up too early to Lennox Lewis, remembers Fortune of the 1995 fourth round TKO loss to one of the greatest heavyweight champions that ever lived. "I didn't have a manager or a promoter to protect my interests so it was the wrong fight for me to take at that point.

When asked about the current heavyweight scene, Fortune, as usual, didn't hold back. "I don't think any heavyweight out there is promising at all, he said of the recent crop. "This is the worst the division has been in history. David Haye just beat John Ruiz. Big f*****g deal. Ruiz has been

Israel Vazquez and Justin Fortune Team Up Again

Written by Ralph Gonzalez
Monday, 12 April 2010 19:00

around forever.

Fortune was also a chef and restaurant owner in Australia when he decided to close shop and start training fighters in America with Roach. That's when a young Filipino buzz-saw named Manny Pacquiao exploded onto the scene.

He spent five years conditioning "Pac-Man alongside Roach and believes that the Filipino is truly a special athlete. "Every now and then there's a fighter that's also a bloody good athlete, Fortune stated. "He's certainly not unbeatable though. No fighter is unbeatable. Morales and Marquez proved that. At the moment he's someone that boxing needs until we get a decent bloody heavyweight. For now it's the little guys like Vazquez and Marquez who provide all the good boxing.

Fortune has been working with Perez, whose task will be to come up with a game plan to defeat Marquez. "Rudy's a good guy and a fine tactician, he stated of the Mexico City based trainer. "Together we can work towards coming up with something that's going to lead to a victory. He'll have his input and I'll have mine.

He has high admiration for the courage Vazquez has repeatedly displayed. "The fight game is not for wimps. If you want to win you have to be willing to hurt someone, Fortune says. "You should be able to take a beating and not let it affect you. If you can't do that then you should get out of the game.

He continues. "The psychology of boxing is to beat the f**k out of the other guy before he does it to you and you gotta be able to take the pain and not quit. You might get a broken jaw or a broken nose but it all heals and that's what I like about Vazquez. He's willing to give you everything he's got and that's what separates the great fighters from the good ones.

After all the drama that ensued during his highly publicized break-up with Roach, Fortune remains positive he can make his own mark in the boxing world and move on to bigger and better things. "Working with Vazquez again will give me some exposure and will attract more fighters to my gym. I appreciate the fact that Israel and Frank realize that I bring a lot of value to their team, he says. "I'm going to give them everything I've got. That's what Israel and I both have in common and that's probably one of the reasons we get along so well. We both expect the best from each other and we're willing to do whatever it takes to get the job done. Tickets for Israel Vazquez vs. Rafael Marquez IV "Once and Four All are priced at \$250, \$125, \$75, \$50 and \$25 are available online at ticketmaster.com, via Ticketmaster charge-by-phone lines at (800)745-3000 and at The Staples Center Box Office in Los Angeles.

Follow Ralph Gonzalez on twitter: www.twitter.com/fightmedia