

LAS VEGAS-When one of the biggest fights in three years is about to happen and you're a boxing writer, it can be a little more exciting than usual.

Driving from Southern California through the desert to Las Vegas is a relaxing almost therapeutic endeavor as you whisk past small towns, military bases and cactus on two-lane freeways that are usually stacked on Friday.

Luckily, I'm driving on a Thursday.

A late start kept me from attending a press conference for the under card of the Floyd Mayweather and Sugar Shane Mosley fight card. By the time I arrived in Las Vegas (carefully staying within the speed limits as Nevada police are known for hiding in speed traps) it's already early Thursday evening. A dinner invitation by Golden Boy Promotions will have to be overlooked though anytime you can get a free meal in Las Vegas is always nice.

The first thing I usually do is go to boxing gyms to see who is training and what's going on. In the past five years numerous gyms have opened in Las Vegas. Before there had been three or four and now there seems to be at least 25 in the gambling mecca.

Because it's already evening I make a few calls to fighters to see what they're doing. One is Layla McCarter the lightweight world champion considered among the top three Pound for Pound fighters in female boxing. The other is Melinda Cooper an undefeated junior featherweight who is looking for a fight. She isn't training but her advisor says they may be traveling to Canada soon for a title fight.

I visit the Pink Taco located inside the Hard Rock Hotel for my customary margarita. It never feels like fun unless I have at least one margarita. Now the adventure begins.

Because it's late, I decide to return to my room, write an advance for a newspaper, and plan the next two days. Thursday is done.

### Friday

During a mega fight the media comes from all over the world. You have writers and photographers from United Kingdom, Russia, Germany, Japan, Korea, Philippines, Mexico, Ireland, Canada and all over the United States. So I arrived early in the massive media center to grab a seat and set up my computer. And also to get some coffee because no real writer can do work without that caffeine surge.

If you're lucky the boxing promoter will provide breakfast, lunch and dinner. Not this time. Coffee is served with some pastries but that's ok. That's all the fuel I need to do what I do.

Written by David A. Avila  
Tuesday, 04 May 2010 15:00

---

Inside the media center I spot old friends and make a few new friends. Tony Walker of HBO pay-per-view is there. We became friends several years ago after discovering we share a passion for UCLA basketball. He's definitely one of the best guys in boxing.

Jeremy of Swanson Communications is there and asks me for a prediction. I give it to him. He later returns to ask why I made this prediction so he can put it on a press release. Later Kelly Swanson, the actual namesake of Swanson Communications, asks me to do a television interview for the upcoming rematch between Juan Manuel Marquez and Juan Diaz. I consent. Doing the interviews on camera is my old and good friend Doug Fischer. He's been making a name for himself doing television commentary. I remember years ago when he and I would have problems getting credentials for a fight. Now here he is interviewing me. Things change.

A decade ago when Fischer and I first became friends I always thought he had the perfect voice for television. I would tell him and he would respond: "do you think so?" Doug is one of the real boxing guys. I say this because most so-called boxing writers never visit a gym unless it's some media day. A lot of boxing writers only know boxers who fight on HBO or Showtime. Not Doug, he knows guys from the get-go until they're gone. Other guys who go to gyms regularly are Steve Kim, Gabriel Montoya and Robert Morales. Now in many cases today's newspaper boxing writers are doing triple duty with all of the layoffs. But when it comes to boxing web sites there really is no excuse for not visiting boxing gyms to go directly to the source. Anybody can write an opinion. Few can do actual reporting where they contact the fighters, trainers and managers. That's where you separate the real journalists from the armchair scribblers. Anybody can write an opinion. That takes no work at all. It takes time, patience and fortitude to track down a fighter and his people to do a story with quotes. That's a real boxing writer.

Ok, no more soapbox.

Inside the media center I see Tattoo of Power 106 radio who will be emcee for the weigh in later in the day. Later my buddy photographer Paul Hernandez arrives with Igor from Burbank Times. Still later, Francisco Salazar of Fightnews comes in. Cisco as I call him, has been a friend of mine since 2000. He's a teacher in Oxnard and tries to attend most fight cards in California. Once in a while he's assigned a Vegas fight card. Larry Merchant is sitting nearby and Harold Lederman passes by and shouts hello in his distinctive voice "David Avila how are you!" Good guy. Loves boxing. If he's in a town and there is a boxing event going on you can believe Lederman will be there. A younger guy that I haven't seen is sitting next to me. His name is Rene he works for Diamond Boxing. Sugar Ray Leonard and Tommy Hearns enter the media room with a throng of photographers flashing in front of them. They talk about what they think of the Mayweather and Mosley showdown. Both say they don't think it will rival their own first battle but feel it will be a tight struggle with Mayweather coming on top.

I return to my room to change clothes, shower and get ready for the fight card later in the night that features Robert "The Ghost" Guerrero, bonus baby Frankie Gomez and others.

A few hours later I returned to the MGM Grand and in that time hundreds of people are milling around the lobby that had been rather empty a few hours earlier. People are beginning to arrive. Inside the media room Igor tells me that everybody in the plane from Burbank was talking about

Written by David A. Avila  
Tuesday, 04 May 2010 15:00

---

the fight. The buzz is definitely in the air.

Since there is no food being served I decide to get some pizza. Cisco agrees and we both head to one of the pizza joints inside the casino. HBO is going to play the final episode of the 24/7 Mayweather-Mosley fight. We decide to attend the viewing as long as it comes before the fight card begins across the street at the Tropicana Hotel and Casino. The final episode is pretty good. I like the casino neon graveyard scene. Nice touch. Most of us head directly to the Tropicana to see Guerrero in action.

Inside the Tropicana I quickly see that a lot of renovations have taken place since my last venture there. Marble floors, spanking new tables, new outfits for the dealers and better lighting are now part of the casino that was the talk of the town when it opened in the early 1960s. Very nice.

We make a long walk to the conference area where the fight is going to be held. Once inside the place quickly filled up. By the time the first bout begins there has to be at least 3,000 fans inside and many of the best boxing writers watching the first Telefutera fight card in a couple of years. As I sit down Bernardo Osuna and Ricardo Celis the Solo Boxeo Tecate announcers for Telefutera greet me and Cisco. It's great to see the dynamic duo back in action. I tell them so. "Not as happy as we are," cracks Osuna. It feels like home again to see them in action. They're very good.

Once the fight card begins Oscar De La Hoya, Erik Morales, Richard Schaefer, and Jorge Paez take their seats. Fans are huddled behind De La Hoya to take his picture. A few of the smart ones ask for De La Hoya and Morales together. Somebody mentions that maybe Morales is going to fight Juan Manuel Marquez in the future. These guys never did meet in the ring. But does the public want to see it?

Another boxing celebrity arrives. It's Alfredo "Perro" Angulo fresh off his victory from a week ago in Ontario, California. Fans rush to Perro and a few even give the "arf arf arf" bark as he goes to his seat.

The fights are great. Guerrero, a former featherweight and junior lightweight world champ, looks like he can handle lightweights with ease. The kid hits hard and he's left-handed. Argentina's Roberto Arrieta tasted the Ghost's power early and went into survival mode. But even that tactic didn't save him when Guerrero decided to turn it on. He blows him out of there,

After writing up the story I head back to the room to change once again. I get a call from some of the guys that they're meeting at the Rouge bar inside the MGM.

Walking back into the MGM I run into Steve Forbes of the Contender reality television fame and a former world champion who fought Oscar De La Hoya and Andre Berto. He's with a friend and we chat a bit about what's going on. He says he is back in Las Vegas and will begin training. He's going to let me know when and where.

Walking into the MGM the place is packed now. It's hard to walk in. But I know it will be more

Written by David A. Avila  
Tuesday, 04 May 2010 15:00

---

packed tomorrow.

I finally get to the Rouge and most of the Golden Boy people are there sitting and chatting. I sit at the table with Bob Santos, one of Guerrero's advisors and Mario Serrano who is Guerrero's publicist. In the same table are Paul and Igor. We talk about the Ghost and other things.

Robert Diaz, one of Golden Boy's matchmakers, stops by to say hello and chat. I mention that maybe Vicente Escobedo should fight the Ghost for Northern California bragging rights. He says it's not a bad choice but they want to get a world title at stake first.

Diaz, who once worked with Marco Antonio Barrera, talks about the visa problems Amir Khan recently experienced. The WBA junior welterweight titleholder is fighting New York's Paul Malignaggi at Madison Square Garden. Malignaggi is no joke. He can fight. Lots of fighters and fans dislike Malignaggi. I always tell people right away that Malignaggi is one of the coolest guys in the sport. He's got class. Really he does. People are always surprised. I told Khan and he was surprised. The British speedster was recently signed by Golden Boy and is facing a very stiff test in the former world champion Malignaggi. Both Khan and Malignaggi are good guys. It's one of those fights where skill will prevail.

Diaz has to leave and a few others decide to depart too. It's already 1:30 a.m. and we need to get up early for a press conference at 10:30 a.m.

### **Saturday**

Ok, so this column is getting too long. Well, it's the day of the big fight. I have to get up early to make a press conference for Juan Manuel Marquez and Juan Diaz at the MGM Grand at 10:30 a.m.

To begin the morning I start off for the local Starbucks located about a block from Top Rank's offices on Paradise Road and Flamingo Road. It's about 8:30 a.m. and I'm hoping a large coffee and breakfast sandwich can last me through the afternoon.

I drink up the coffee, eat the sandwich, iron my clothes, shower and pack my bags because after the fight I'm heading immediately back to Southern California. As I'm heading out the door I begin to feel queasy. Real queasy. I get a call from Cisco asking if I can take him to the conference. He's staying at the same hotel as me so I say yes and tell him to meet me at the lobby. As I walk to the lobby to check out I feel like I ate something rotten.

Nearly 20 years ago I had cancer and went through six months of chemo then another three months of radiation. After going through that it takes a lot to get me nauseous. I'm feeling big time nausea.

We walk into the MGM with all of our equipment. Its crowded. A bunch of fighters are near the lobby including the Dirrell brothers and Mosley's cut man Cassius Green is holding court. I also spot boxing writer Chris Robinson. Women are walking around in bathing suits inside the casino and you can't walk a straight line because people are every where. I zigzag through the

## Las Vegas Journal: Mayweather-Mosley

Written by David A. Avila  
Tuesday, 04 May 2010 15:00

---

multitudes like halfback Gayle Sayers back in the 1960s. Inside the media center I grab a seat in the front with a bunch of friends. Soon after the Golden Boy group comes out including the two fighters Diaz and Marquez.

The last time they fought it was voted Fight of the Year with Marquez knocking out Diaz with a vicious uppercut. Diaz had been ahead on the score cards when Marquez set the trap for him and unloaded. Pretty stuff.

After they finish the conference, Beristain comes over to talk with us about what's going on in his camp. He's very open about everything. Makes fun of my Spanish but what can I say, it's pretty awful.

Beristain leaves then enters Alfredo "Perro" Angulo. He spots me and comes over to talk and we laugh a bit. His brother Cesar is also with him and he asks what I think about the fight tonight. I tell him I think Mosley can pull it off. Both he and Perro hope I'm right. Perro was in a tough fight with Joel Julio a week ago. That Colombian kid had guts. I mean he was taking some shots and dishing it back. It reminded me of Miguel Cotto against Manny Pacquiao. Out-gunned and beaten down they refused to quit. It was the some of the greatest acts of courage I've seen in boxing. Julio never impressed me a lot until last week in defeat. That kid can fight.

It's still about two hours from the first bell and I'm starting to really feel bad. I drink water hoping it will help. Nope, no improvement. I'm getting worse by the minute. I feel like sleeping. I look at the Kentucky Derby on the big screen in the media room.

Finally it's time to go inside the arena. I'm getting chills and feverish and start thinking about leaving to go home. Man, I don't want to vomit in front of press row and in front of thousands of fans.

The first fight begins and it's Luis Ramos. I made it and Ramos makes it a quick second round knockout. I'm reeling too and for the next six hours I barely manage to survive. I'm like the postman even in sickness or stormy weather I'm going to come through with that story Jack.

It was the worst crap I ever put out.

Sorry everybody.

Everybody has their bad nights. Mine happened to occur on the biggest fight in three years.

We all know what happened in the big fight. Mayweather was Mayweather and Mosley couldn't pull the trigger after the second round. From my perspective Mosley seemed afraid of getting KO'd by Mayweather and pulled back from charging in and banging. The banger was out-banged by the boxer.

A big party was going on at the MGM Grand after the fight but I sped out of there, got in my car and headed back through the desert night to California.