

Still Smokin': Ricardo Mayorga Tries Mixed Martial Arts

Written by Ralph Gonzalez
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The date was January 25th, 2003. The scene: The Pechanga Casino in Temecula, California. A barely known Nicaraguan by the name of Ricardo Mayorga had just knocked out the late Vernon Forrest in three fury filled rounds. It was a result that shocked the audience as well as the viewers at home watching on H.B.O. At the time, Forrest was considered among the top three fighters in the world regardless of weight division.

With the spectacular knock-out, Mayorga was thrust into the spotlight and dug himself out of the poverty he once knew as a youth in Managua, Nicaragua where he involved himself in thuggish activities in order to survive. He brought that street brawler mentality to all his fights. He molded himself into the anti Oscar De La Hoya by ridiculing and insulting his opponents. He showed up at weigh-ins and climbed on the scale with a slice of pizza and a lit cigarette or a beer in hand. Mayorga's outspoken macho attitude and tirades made for headlines all over the print and internet media.

He eventually defeated Forrest in the rematch and his career continued to flourish with victories over the likes of Michele Piccirillo and Fernando Vargas. Towards the end of his boxing stint he lost to future hall of famers Oscar De La Hoya, Felix Trinidad and Shane Mosley. In Mayorga's last boxing match, he was knocked out by Mosley in round 12 on September 27, 2008. He retired with a very respectable 28 wins and 7 losses.

On May 15th, the 36-year-old Mayorga makes his return to the fight game. But there's a twist. This time he's venturing into the Mixed Martial Arts universe. The former two division world champion is scheduled to face UFC veteran Din Thomas (25-8) on Shine Promotion's Pay Per View "Worlds Collide from Fayetteville, North Carolina.

"I'm going to make it a street fight, said Mayorga when asked how he planned to defeat the well regarded Thomas. "I grew up in a rough neighborhood where I had a lot of street fights and never lost once. Thomas isn't going to last two minutes.

Thomas says "El Matador is in for a shock. "When I first heard he was getting into M.M.A. I gave him credit, he said of Mayorga at a recent New York press conference for the event. "Now I realize he's just a dumb-ass that doesn't know what he's getting into. He's got one month to prepare for the ass-whipping of his life.

"Let him talk, Mayorga responded when asked about the comment. "I've been fighting big mouths like him all my life. He's no different. He never won a world title, he's done nothing. Nobody knows who he is. I fought the best in boxing. He's never fought anyone with the skills I have.

While Mayorga may have the advantage in a boxing match, Thomas will most likely make the smart choice and take the fight to the ground. "I've been training in MMA for a few months and I'm feeling pretty confident right now. A lot of what I've been training in is the same I used when

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I was fighting in the streets. We used kicks and wrestling, everything, Mayorga said. "I know how to avoid the take down but if he wants to take it to the ground I know what I have to do to get back up. He's not going to be able keep me down.

Thomas, a Brazilian Jiu jitsu black belt who trains with American Top Team, is intent on punishing Mayorga, who's never been one to show respect to most of his opponents. "I thought about taking him down and choking him out and finishing the fight quickly but I'm going to drag him through it, the UFC veteran said. "If he thinks that what Oscar De La Hoya did to him was an ass whipping then he has no idea what he's got coming.

Mayorga insists he's not worried. "This fight is going to show that if any decent boxer can avoid the takedown or find a way to get back up, the typical MMA fighter doesn't stand a chance, he said over the phone. "Especially against a former world champion like me who fought and beat legends. I'm talking about real champions. Who's this guy?

Whether he wins or not, Mayorga stated that he's not done with boxing. "After this fight I want to continue my career as a boxer. I still have a lot left. I've been training with my good friend and former champion Rosendo Alvarez and I feel stronger than ever. I just needed a break from the sport, he stated. "After I knock out Din Thomas then we'll see what's out there for me in the boxing world. I know my representatives are working on getting me a match.

For now Mayorga's focus remains on training and getting down to the 160 pound catch weight. "I'm a few pounds over but I'm used to burning off those last pounds quickly, he said. "It doesn't matter. When I knocked out the great Vernon Forrest I was smoking and drinking. Imagine what I'm going to do to a nobody like Din Thomas.

WORLDS COLLIDE takes place at the Crown Coliseum in Fayetteville, NC, and will be presented on PPV in the United States and Canada. The event will be available in both English and Spanish. The broadcast will start at 9 PM ET/6 PM PT. The cost will be \$29.95. Tickets may be obtained by calling Ticketmaster at 1-800-736-1420, or online via ticketmaster.com or in person at the Crown Coliseum Box Office. For more info call (910) 438-4100. Also on the card: Murilo "Ninja Rua vs. Travis "The Gladiator Galbraith; Nick "The Goat Thompson vs. Eduardo Pamplona; Braulio Estima vs. Rick Hawn; Alexandre "Cacareco Ferreira vs. Jamal "The Suit Patterson; Junior Assuncao vs. Luiz "The Joker Azeredo

On Youtube:

Ricardo Mayorga-Din Thomas press conference: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qn33zm4X0Y>