

TSS WHERE ARE THEY NOW? Carlos Palomino

Written by Shawn Murphy
Sunday, 13 June 2010 15:00

Originally from Mexico, Carlos Palominos family emigrated to the United States in 1960. After being drafted into the Army in 1970, Palominos amateur career culminated in winning the 1972 National AAU light welterweight championship. Palomino was 19-1 as a pro when he met John Stracey in 1976. Team Stracey considered Palomino a safe opponent, but Palomino proved otherwise, stopping Stracey in the 12th round and taking his WBC welterweight title. He would defend his title seven times before losing a split decision to Wilfred Benitez in 1979. After a brief comeback in 1997, Palomino retired the following year. He has been inducted into both the International and the World Boxing Hall of Fame.

SM: Carlos it's a real pleasure to talk to you. Let me ask you where did you start fighting, in Mexico or in the United States?

CP: It was after I came to the United States. My family emigrated in 1960. My father had a lot of family here in the US so he wanted to come here. It took almost three years to get here, to get through the legal process. You had to have a job here in order to be given a chance to come. With some help my father found a company willing to hire him and thats how we got in. I learned to fight in the Army. My father was always a big boxing fan and my brother and I watched it too. If there were problems in the house with my brother and I, my father told us to put on the gloves and go to it. My father taught us what he could about boxing. Before going off to boot camp I went to a gym just to get in shape. I had a trainer come up to me and ask if I was interested in fighting. I told him I was just there to get in shape. He mentioned that I could box in the Army and possibly get on the team there. He told me to find a gym after basic training. I ended up in Fort Hood and at that time the Fort Hood Boxing Championships were going on. I walked into the gym and saw the sign and talked to the coach. I joined the tournament and ended up winning my division. From there I went to the All-Army Boxing hampionships at Fort Bragg and won that. I didn't start with the idea that I would turn pro but after winning the National AAU title I thought maybe I had a shot at a career. I had a lot of people talking to me at the time about a career. After I got out of the Army in 1972 I came back to California and got started. I had my first pro fight in September 1972.

SM: Was a world title a realistic goal for you?

CP: I thought so. Of course the goal is always to be a world champion. After my Army boxing career I felt I had a strong will to win and beat a lot of guys with much more experience. I just felt good about my chances.

SM: Whats the story about the Chinese acupuncturist who cured a possible career ending injury you had?

CP: I had a 6th rounder in 1973 and in about the 2nd round I felt something pop in my shoulder. I won the fight but the next day the whole underneath of my shoulder was completely swollen. I could move my arm but it was completely out of whack. I was told I needed surgery and that I

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might never fight again. I passed on surgery and got a second opinion and decided to take some time off to let it heal. A few months later a guy I knew told me about this acupuncturist who had helped him when he was wheelchair bound. I dont even think acupuncture was legal then. Anyway I went to this guy down in Chinatown and after ten treatments I was fine. I made my comeback in 1974.

SM: What happened in the Andy Price fight (Aug. 1974)?

CP: I just saw Andy at an event two weeks ago. When I fought him he was 18-0 and it was my first ten rounder. We went ten good hard rounds. It was just a hard fight for me.

SM: The champion at the time was John Stracey and his team said they wanted a nice easy fight. They were wrong werent they?

CP: They thought it would be easy because I fought Hedgemon Lewis to a draw and Stracey had just beat Lewis. He had a real different European style of fighting. I felt that with my body attack I had a good chance of winning. I worked hard for every fight and this one was no different. I was always a gym rat and I even ran with the college track team to train. He tried to push his body on me but it just didn't work like it did against Lewis.

SM: You picked a tough first defense in Armando Muniz (Jan. 1977) didn't you?

CP: Yeah well back in the day you didn't really have a choice. He was the number one contender. I knew Armando and his style and knew it would be a very difficult fight.

SM: What were your feelings about the fight going into the final round?

CP: Going back to my corner after the 14th round, Jackie McCoy told me the fight was even and I needed the 15th to win. I knew I had to go out and fight or I would lose my title.

SM: Why wasnt a fight between you and Pipino Cuevas ever made, to unify the title?

CP: Money. We were offered like \$100,000 each at one point. We each had three title defenses when that offer was made. We both said we would wait and see if they could make it more money. Benitez was the number one contender and I was told I had to go down to Puerto Rico to fight him. I thought I could go down and knock him out and then fight Pipino. I think we would have sold out anywhere. I lost the title to Benitez and Hearn beat Pipino and that was the end of that.

SM: Did you take Benitez lightly?

CP: No, I worked really hard for the fight (Jan. 1979) and I still think I won it. I tried to get a rematch but was told they wouldn't fight me again.

SM: What happened in the Duran fight (June 1979)?

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CP: You know I lost three fights before I made my comeback and they were all good fighters. I thought I beat Price and Benitez. Duran got off a lot more than I did. I didn't feel he was the strongest, hardest puncher I fought but he had a lot more speed than I realized. He just kept me off balance.

SM: What were your specific reasons for the comeback in 1997?

CP: My father passed away in 1995. I just went back to the gym where I started and hung out as a champion. When I walked in I just felt the presence of my Dad so strong. Coming back was like healing my heart. It just felt good being there. I got an offer and didn't really take it serious at first. Hector Camacho was there training and told me to get in the ring and get some rounds in. Eventually I was offered a contract for a million dollars. I didn't make a million dollars in my whole career. That's what started it. After the Wilfredo Rivera loss (May 1998) I just didn't feel like doing it anymore.

SM: Regrets about your career, anything you would have done different?

CP: Not really. I went out with the idea that boxing was going to get me out of Vietnam. I knew I had to make the Army team to stay out of the war, that was the initial incentive. I went far enough to win a world title and to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. I'm very satisfied.

SM: So what are you up to today?

CP: I still audition for acting roles. I also have a credit card processing company for small businesses. I'm also promoting a boxing and MMA card at the San Diego Sports Arena on August 14th. I'm involved in a program for at-risk kids called Jeopardy. It's kind of like PAL (Police Athletic League).

There are several programs but I'm involved with the one in Van Nuys. Another project I'm involved in is a movie called Sonny Boy so give me a shot! I would like to play the lead in it. We are trying to line up funding for it now.

SM: Carlos thanks for your time.

CP: Of course, thanks to everyone.

Editor Note: Please support the Retired Boxers Foundation, as Murphy does.