

Battle For San Antonio: Elizondo Or Martinez?

Written by David A. Avila
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A battle for bragging rights between two San Antonio fighters Raul Martinez and Gabriel Elizondo could be the fight of the night on the huge boxing card on Saturday night.

Martinez (26-1, 15 KOs) and Elizondo (22-3-1, 10 KOs) could steal much of the thunder when they meet in the ring in a supporting role of the Latin Fury fight card on Saturday June 26. Yes Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. and John Duddy are the main event but we're talking about two local Texans.

"May the war begin," says Elizondo.

The beauty of this fight is the pair of Texans have built up a following and reputation that began as amateurs. They've both sparred each other numerous times and are familiar with each other. You might even call them friends. But this is prizefighting.

"You can call it a rivalry, he's is a good friend of mine. He has his fans and I have mine," says Martinez. "We're good friends but in the ring there are no good friends."

Elizondo expects critics to say he's a huge under dog against Martinez especially due to his absence from the ring due to a torn rotator cuff. Forget about it.

"We sparred. Not a lot. Seven times. It was 16 pounce gloves. There is nothing to compare it to. It's not the same thing with 16 oz gloves. It's a whole different thing with 8 oz gloves. Shots are going to come in. That's what professional boxing is all about," said Elizondo who was unable to fight for almost three years.

Martinez knows this is an opportunity to convince Top Rank that he deserves another world title shot despite the loss to Nonito Donaire last year. Martinez and Elizondo are fighting for the Texas title.

"I fought for the IBA world title so I got my taste of 12 rounds and I fought Donaire and it didn't go my way. I took that as a great learning experience," says Martinez who is now fighting as a 122 pound junior featherweight. "It's for the Texas title belt. It's a title belt and it means getting that victory and getting closer to another world title shot."

In this age of television match ups the local rivalries some times get lost in the shuffle. A number of intense rivalries often never get made. Remember Aaron Pryor's inability to get Tommy Hearns in the ring. Both fought at Detroit's Kronk gym but never could get together in the ring for the real deal.

Elizondo has returned to his old trainer Tony Ayala Sr. and feels he has more to lose at this stage. He's not wasting any more time.

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“I’m just happy I have Tony back. I’m 11-0 with Tony. I’m glad I’m back with him,” said Elizondo. “The winner gets to be the best fighter of San Antonio. This is what everybody is talking about it.”

Martinez is the shorter fighter but packs a punch. Elizondo has made a living fighting as the underdog.

“Beating him is just me being me. Being able to adapt to his style and counter him with my style and take over the fight the way I want to fight. If I can get into his fight and stay with my game plan that’s how I’ll win,” said Martinez.

Elizondo says opponents have underestimated him from the get go as a professional.

“Everybody thought (Glenn) Donaire was going to stop me. Same in this fight. Everybody says Raul is going to knock me out,” says Elizondo. “But if you miss then that’s it. If he wants to go for a KO then you have to prepare for what’s coming back at you.”

Who will be the king of San Antonio?