

JMM Marquez-Diaz Embodies Mexican Revolution

Written by David A. Avila
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One hundred years ago the Mexican Revolution erupted and warriors like Pancho Villa, Emiliano Zapata and Francisco Madero fought against overwhelming odds and forces.

It's the same spirit that Mexican fighters are still engrained with; that willingness to go to the death swinging even when the opponent is stronger, faster, and more experienced.

Mexico City's Juan Manuel Marquez exemplifies that spirit from the steely gaze in his eyes to the intense focus he exhibits while hitting the mitts, doing sit ups or running up the mountainsides near Mexico's capital city.

Marquez (50-5-1, 37 KOs) defends his WBA and WBO lightweight world titles against former world champion Juan Diaz (35-3, 17 KOs) of Texas on Saturday July 31. The rematch takes place at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino and televised on HBO pay-per-view.

A number of Mexican and Mexican-American prizefighters lead the top-heavy fight card on the 100th anniversary of the Mexican Revolution.

The Mexican Revolution began for many in June 1910 when the intellectual revolutionary Madero was arrested while running for president against the incumbent Porfirio Diaz. For more than 10 years millions of Mexican lost their lives in battles that took place from Chiapas to Juarez.

Bloody fights were normal for Mexico in small towns and big cities as sides were chosen and guns were picked up by both men and women. That fighting mentality was passed on from generation to generation and still exists today.

It's not surprising that the same fighting philosophy has continued with Mexico's prizefighters. Wave after wave of Mexican boxers with their "two-for-two" philosophy have arrived to display their fistic talents in the U.S. My two punches for your two punches is the foundation for many of that country's pugilists. It's also Mexico's preferred style to watch.

The first arrival of Mexican fighters actually came from Mexican-American fighters born in the U.S. like Solly Garcia Smith, Mexican Joe Rivers, and Bert Colima. Then came the Mexican born fighters like Baby Arizmendi, Enrique Bolanos, Kid Azteca and others.

A small ripple of Mexican fighters became a tidal wave with the arrival of Salvador Sanchez, Julio Cesar Chavez, and Humberto "Chiquita" Gonzalez in the 1980s. Then we saw Ricardo "Finito" Lopez, Marco Antonio Barrera, Erik Morales and the brothers Rafael and Juan Manuel Marquez follow suit in the next decade.

Of all those boxers Juan Manuel Marquez has remained at the top of the pinnacle the longest.

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How does he do it?

Diaz, who was knocked out in the ninth round though leading in the fight in March 2009, thinks he knows the reasons.

‘What makes him so smart; a lot of guys when they go in there and fight they’re thinking of landing punches and just throwing and landing. What he does very well is he thinks,’ said Diaz, 26, whose fight with Marquez was voted Fight of the Year in 2009. ‘You throw a punch and land with that one punch, but next time around you’re not going to hit him. That’s what makes him so great. And he’s a great counter puncher.’

Marquez is the wizard of Mexican fighting and even when he looks to be within inches of total defeat can turn things around as he did in two fights with current Pound for Pound champion Manny Pacquiao. Only Floyd Mayweather was able to convincingly defeat him, but that was at the 147-pound welterweight level. Now Marquez is back to 135 pounds and defending his lightweight world championship.

‘It takes two to tango and Juan Diaz deserves the same recognition. The second fight should be equal or better than the first fight,’ Marquez says of their first explosive encounter. ‘We’re going to counter with a great fight, a lot of technical boxing, finesse, movement and angles.’

Marquez, 36, says the warrior’s road began long before he ever put on gloves as a professional.

‘The old school of boxing was taught to me by my father. He was taught by old school trainers like Cuyo Hernandez. My boxing ability comes from a long history of fighters,’ said Marquez.

The ghosts of the Mexican Revolution are probably nodding their heads.

Other bouts

Lightweight world champion Robert ‘The Ghost’ Guerrero (26-1-1, 18 KOs) steps into the junior welterweight class to face Cuba’s legendary Joel Casamayor (37-4-1, 22 KOs) in a 10-round skirmish between southpaws. Guerrero was forced to cancel his previous bout due to his wife’s battle against leukemia earlier this year. She is now in a healthier state and Guerrero is back to work in the high quality Las Vegas fight card.

New York’s Daniel ‘Golden Child’ Jacobs (20-0, 17 KOs) faces Russia’s Dmitry Pirog (16-0, 13 KOs) for the vacant WBO middleweight world title in Las Vegas.

Venezuela’s Jorge Linares (28-1, 18 KOs) was once considered the heir to Oscar De La Hoya because of his talent and good looks. But a surprising loss to Mexico’s Juan Salgado in 2009 tripped him up. Rocky Juarez (28-6-1, 20 KOs) needs a win in Las Vegas against Linares to remain a contender.

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Grudge match

In Nayarit, Mexico, two former junior bantamweight world champions Jorge "El Travieso" Arce (54-6-1) and Martin "Gallito" Castillo (35-3) finally meet in battle. It's a fight that should have happened back in 2007 when both were champions of a very loaded division at 115 pounds. Still, it's a grudge match and it pits Arce's strength and against Castillo's skill. It should be very interesting.

Fights on television

Fri., ESPN2, 6 p.m., Don George (20-0-1) vs. Francisco Sierra (21-3).

Fri., Telefutera, 11:30 p.m., Danny Garcia (17-0) vs. Jorge Romero (17-2).

Sat. Fox Sports Network, 8 p.m., Jorge Arce (54-6-1) vs. Martin Castillo (35-3).

Sat. HBO pay-per-view, 6 p.m., Juan Manuel Marquez (50-5-1) vs. Juan Diaz (35-3); Robert Guerrero (26-1-1) vs. Joel Casamayor (37-4-1); Daniel Jacobs (20-0) vs. Dmitry Pirog (16-0); Jorge Linares (28-1) vs. Rocky Juarez (28-6-1).

Sun. Versus, 6 p.m., Jon Jones (10-1) vs. Vladimir Matyushenko (24-4).