

In a rural Maryland office park far from the madness of Las Vegas and Manny Pacquiao-Antonio Margarito, Paul Williams – the boxer who comprises one half of a match-up far less polarizing than this weekend's affair – broke camp Friday.

As Williams winded down his training by sparring seven rounds, pounding the mitts and skipping rope in advance of his Nov. 20 rematch with Sergio Martinez, no HBO cameras followed him around, like they do for Pacquiao and Margarito. No one crowded at the door awaiting his entrance, how they do for international superstar Pacquiao. No one recorded any videos mocking Freddie Roach for having Parkinson's disease, the way they did in Margarito's camp.

For all its controversies and its big-name headliner, Pacquiao-Margarito might or might not be a good fight; Margarito is as much as a 6-1 betting underdog. Williams-Martinez II is quieter outside the ring, but inside, it stacks up on paper as a hardcore fan's delight.

Some fans are complaining about Pacquiao-Margarito happening at all, given Margarito's glove-loading scandal. Nobody's complaining about Williams-Martinez II.

For those eager to move beyond Pacquiao-Margarito, next weekend's fight could be a hangover antidote.

George Peterson, Williams' trainer, predicted Williams-Martinez II will be the best fight in the middleweight division in 10 years. It could be. But it would have to surpass the first meeting of Williams-Martinez, which many considered the best bout of 2009.

Williams, once a shy interviewee who spilled words in inverse ratio to his copious punch output, isn't talking about throwing 100 punches a round against Martinez. "Could be 200, he said, smiling. (That's more than one punch every second, math junkies.)

Before the last fight, Peterson said Martinez would be easy work. Martinez proved anything but. If there is any controversy about the rematch, it's that some believe Martinez deserved the victory the first time.

But Peterson still doesn't see anything special in Martinez. "I don't see nothing exciting about him, he said. "He's got a lot of people fooled.

Nor was he impressed by Martinez' showing against Kelly Pavlik, a fight where the Argentinian slickster took Pavlik's lineal middleweight championship from him and made Pavlik's face look like his opponent wielded a hatchet rather than fists. "Pavlik's a 1-2 robot, Peterson said. Martinez won a relatively close decision when "he should've boxed circles around him.

As such, Williams and Peterson are focusing less on what Martinez offers and more on what they should do. Williams has said he should have moved his head more and gone to Martinez'

Written by TSS Press

Thursday, 11 November 2010 19:00

body more frequently, but once he got caught with the 1st round shot that knocked him down, his fighting instinct took over.

“I know what I did wrong the first time, he said. “I let him get off. I didn’t take control like I normally take control. It doesn’t matter what he do. I’m going to show him what happens when the real Paul Williams shows up and is on point that night.

Peterson said every boxer trains hard, but not all of them train smart – and Williams trains smart by focusing on his opponent. So what, then, is Peterson’s plan for the counter right hand Martinez landed virtually at will last time around? “Paul is going to get hit by the counter right. He’s going to get cracked, Peterson said. “Is he ready for Paul’s left hand?

From 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., Friday in the gym was deadly serious for Williams. The South Carolina native spoke hardly a word. “It’s quiet in here today, said one of Williams’ assistants, prompting a half-grin from Williams. Carlos Quintana, with whom Williams split two fights and was brought into camp to help mimic Martinez’ crafty southpaw style, shot a few hoops waiting for Williams to get ready to spar.

Peterson doesn’t want to give away too much strategy and asked two reporters Friday not to write about Williams sparring with Quintana and a local fighter, Eric Govan. Peterson wants to keep Williams opponents guessing. In his last fight, against Kermit Cintron, Peterson said the idea was to throw Cintron for a loop by forcing him to initiate early, since Cintron would expect Williams to come out aggressively. The awkward encounter ended with Cintron freakishly catapulting out of the ring, tossing the bout to the scorecards, with Williams winning but some questioning why he didn’t look like his usual self. But Peterson said he was pleased. It was Williams most obedient performance, he said.

The volume in Atlantic City Nov. 20 will be much higher than it was in the quiet Maryland gym Friday. The bout’s in Atlantic City, and reportedly tickets are selling well. Williams likes fighting there, as an East Coast man; until now, Goossen-Tutor Promotions has yet to find a spot where he can consistently generate a crowd. He also would like to fight in Washington, near where he trains with Peterson, a D.C. native. Williams said fans walk up to him and say, “I know you’re from down south, but you’re a D.C. cat.

Williams understands that a second win over Martinez would be big for his career, and argues, along with Peterson, that the winner should be declared pound-for-pound king. That’s unlikely to happen, but with Pacquiao fighting the lesser lights of Joshua Clottey and Margarito in 2010 (and Floyd Mayweather sidelined for now by legal woes, disinterest or more) the winner of Williams-Martinez II creeps closer into the discussion.

The fact that the lineal middleweight championship is on the line also bolsters the winner, although some have criticized Williams’ camp for pressing for a 158-pound catchweight. Peterson was coy on why, saying a couple pounds shouldn’t matter; Dan Goossen has said it is because Williams was preparing to fight at 147 lbs. And Williams said it’s not his concern: “I don’t care what weight I fight at. That’s up to my manager and my promoter. I just want to fight.

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And that's exactly what he plans to do, no frills.

"We're going to war. I'm good for it. I hope he's good for it, Williams said.

EDITORS NOTE: Starks is the founder and leader of the superior Queensberry Rules (queensberry-rules.com/) website. Some call it a blog but that term has a lightweight connotation for some. It isn't lightweight. The work there is insightful, and frequently irreverent, and always solid.