

## **BORGES: You Can Send Margarito, Manny and Arum a Message**

Written by Ron Borges

Monday, 01 February 2010 18:00

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The problem posed by Antonio Margarito is a complicated one and it has nothing to do with his skills inside a boxing ring and everything to do with what was found inside his hand wraps just over a year ago.

The night he sat in his locker room at the Staples Center in Los Angeles and Shane Mosley's trainer, Nazim Richardson, noticed what paid public officials hired to ferret out such things did not must forever change how he is perceived by boxing fans and the people inside his sport.

What Richardson saw was something he didn't like about his hand wraps, which were already in place. A dispute arose and eventually the hands were unwrapped and an illegal knuckle pad covered in what was later believed to be a plaster of paris like hardening agent were discovered. How this could have happened with the state of California having inspectors allegedly in the room when a fighter's hands are wrapped is baffling although sadly not unexpected.

The larger issue is what happens now. Margarito and trainer Javier Capetillo were suspended for a year by the California Commission, a suspension honored throughout the United States. Although Margarito's bombastic promoter, Bob Arum, threatened to promote Margarito in Mexico, outside the U.S. commission's jurisdiction, and tried to claim every sentence of the Bill of Rights had been violated, in this case the fact was his guy was guilty. And if he didn't know it he should have become a Mob lawyer rather than a member of Robert Kennedy's Justice Department after he left Harvard Law School. Wisely, Arum allowed Margarito to serve out his suspension without boxing.

Now a year has passed and the word has come down that Arum is working to put Margarito on as the co-feature on the Manny Pacquiao-Joshua Clottey March 13 pay-per-view show at Cowboys Stadium outside of Dallas. This is a particularly interesting juxtaposition since the only reason Pacquiao is fighting Clottey that night is his own refusal to submit to effective random blood testing as part of a requirement to meet Floyd Mayweather, Jr. in a far bigger promotion on the same date.

Despite all his best excuses, Pacquiao's refusal has left him under a cloud of doubt about whether or not he used performance enhancing drugs including EPO, the blood doping drug. Pacquiao has never tested positive and insists he's innocent. He may well be but that cloud over him only darkened last week when Shane Mosley, who has admitted to past PED and EPO use himself, agreed to the same testing procedures Pacquiao rejected.

Now joining Pacquiao on that card, it appears, will be another fighter under a cloud, Margarito. Good thing there's a retractable roof on Cowboys Stadium.

A journeyman named Carson Jones (24-7-1, 15 KO) has agreed to face Margarito in what will be the biggest fight of his life. He's there, of course, because he doesn't figure to offer up much

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resistance to the former welterweight champion even after a year-long layoff. Yet even Jones admitted if he didn't see this fight as an opportunity at a living wage for once he'd be a bit reluctant to get in with Margarito after he was caught wearing loaded hand wraps.

The California Commission is quietly peeved that Margarito will not first stand before them before trying to fight in another state but they are powerless to do anything about it. Texas, which is best known for lousy judging and one-sided refereeing, seems set to approve Margarito's re-licensing despite some odd statistics that make you wonder.

The 31 year old Margarito is 25-3 with 17 knockouts yet in most cases such figures don't inflate as you age in large part because the competition you begin to face improves considerably as you move up in the world of boxing. Yet Margarito is 12-3 with 10 KOs in his last 15 fights, a 66 per cent KO rate. Most troubling, he destroyed first Kermit Cintron, who had little trouble with anyone else before him yet took a one-sided beating that night, and later Miguel Cotto, to whom he gave the worst beating of his life. One fight later Margarito was found with loaded hand wraps.

Although this is only circumstantial evidence up to the Mosley fight it is troubling in the extreme, especially after Mosley took him apart and was never hurt by him after his hands were re-wrapped without the brick in them.

So now he wants to come back and fight and what do you do? Luis Resto, who was found to be wearing loaded gloves the night he beat the sight and in many ways the life out of Billy Collins, Jr., went to jail for what he was found to be a party to that evening. Antonio Margarito went on a siesta for a year, admitting nothing and technically never fighting with loaded gloves because they were discovered by Richardson before the fight. Now he wants to go back to work after serving his time.

What do you do? The knee-jerk reaction is to deny him a license, essentially banning him for life, but California chose not to do that. This leaves Texas in the position of having a fighter whose suspension is over wanting to fight. They could say go back to California and deal with them first but would they have a legal right to do so?

Perhaps, but the suspension is up and there's no question Margarito is a proficient professional prize fighter. So, it would seem they almost have no choice but to license him.

Fans however do have a choice. In this case they could stand up for fair play in boxing, something as rare as a investment banker being found to have a conscience, and refuse to buy the fight.

Send a message to Antonio Margarito that you don't like what he did, which frankly was try to endanger the life of his opponent more than is the norm in what is a brutal sport in the best of times.

It would also send a message to Manny Pacquiao that if you are who you say you are what's the harm in this fraudulent, steroid-ridden age of sports, in being asked to prove it?

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Perhaps the Texas Boxing Commission can't do anything but license Antonio Margarito to fight. Perhaps Arum and HBO can't do anything but promote the next fight of boxing's most popular practitioner, Manny Pacquiao. But boxing fans have an option they often seem to forget.

They can speak loudly with the only thing anyone in the sport hears. They can speak with their money and say this time, "Thanks but no thanks."